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Kendall, Ritchie D. The Drama of Dissent: The radical politics of nonconformity, 1381-1590 (Studies in Religion series) Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, UK distr. AUPG. 286pp. £25.50. 0 8078 1700 7. 2/87.

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Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen, editors The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih poetry from the Late Han to the Tang (Studies on China, 6) Gailford: Princeton UP. 405pp. £38.40. 0 691 03134 7.

Vandenbroucke, Ruesell Truitts the Hand Can Touch: The theatre of Alfred Fugard (Paper Books series) Corgi: Donker, distr. by Global Book Resources. 206pp. £6.35 (paperback). 0 69832 015 2. 1/86.

Wilgus, D. K., and Barro Toelken The Ballad and the Scholars: Approaches to ballad study: Papers presented at a Clark Library Seminar 22 October 1983 Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California. 54pp.

Womack, Peter Ben Jonson (Receding Literature series) Oxford: Blackwell. 181pp. £15 (hardcover), £4.95 (paperback). 0 631 14375 0 (hcl), 0 631 14376 9 (pb). 8/1/87.

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## Music

Levin, David Generalized Musical Intervals and Transformations Yale UP. 255pp. £10. 0 300 03493 8. 22/1/87.

Russell, Ian, editor Singer, Song and Scholar Sheffield Academic Press. 177pp. illus. (paperback). 1 85075 054 8.

## Natural sciences

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## Cover picture

"Landscapes carrying their Lutes in Town", about 1878, by Degas, is reproduced from *The Private Degas* by Richard Thomson (146pp. Herbert Press, £12.95, 0906969 67 0). The book accompanies an exhibition of the same name which can be seen at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester until February 28; the exhibition is reviewed on page 112.

## A Cambridge education

## Joseph Brodsky

BARRIE PENROSE and SIMON FREEMAN  
*Conspiracy of Silence: The secret life of Anthony Blunt*  
588pp. Grafton. £14.95.  
0246 122005

The reason that spy literature, whether fiction or straight records of intelligence and counter-intelligence operations, generates so much interest is that everybody has a stake in duplicity. For, whether actively or in self-defence, we all want to know how far our species can go in deceiving its kind. In this anthropological sense, Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman's *Conspiracy of Silence* is a let-down, not only because of the mediocrity of the creed in the name of which its hero became a spy, but also because it tells us very little about the actual fruits of Blunt's spying for the Soviet Union. This is not so much the fault of the authors as of the Official Secrets Act, which prevents the release of the relevant material by the intelligence establishment, for which Blunt worked during the Second World War. Judging by the results of the official investigation described in this book, one is tempted, indeed, to conclude that "The secret life of Anthony Blunt" is a let-down about a let-down. It is a temptation worth resisting.

Devoid of any literary merit, this 588-page book is nevertheless an absorbing read - because it offers a rather balanced view of a controversy nearly three decades old. About time, one may mutter, for there is hardly an adult in the English-speaking world today who is unfamiliar with the Cambridge Gang of Four (or Five, or Six, or Seven, or more), the piecemeal revelations of whose treachery rocked the British intelligence service at the rate of roughly one every three years. Doggedly thorough and conscientious, Penrose and Freeman's endeavour indeed verges at times on nostalgia.

The chief virtue of *Conspiracy of Silence* lies in its being a compendium of the available material, instead of a launch-pad for yet another crackpot theory. Yet it is precisely the quantity and diversity of the material on which the authors draw (memoirs, letters, taped interviews and so forth) that make the book's title a bit of a misnomer. For here everybody talks: a good half of the volume consists of quotes. Nor does its subtitle - "The secret life of Anthony Blunt" - do any better, since the space occupied in these pages by the life and

career of Guy Burgess should entitle him at least to join on the cover the man whose bed and convictions he once shared.

The matter of conviction is somewhat more prominent than that of the shared bed. It appears to be an accepted fact that some time in the early 1930s the future heroes of this saga, then students at Cambridge, converted to Marxism, a doctrine to which they adhered with varying degrees of intensity for the rest of their lives. As the main reasons for that conversion, Penrose and Freeman - and countless others - cite the sorry state of the British economy at the time and the spectre of German fascism rapidly becoming flesh. Equally conclusive were the suspicions the young men harboured about what they perceived as the pro-fascist foreign policy of the British government, and their somewhat contradictory apprehensiveness regarding the impending war with fascism (they were of call-up age). The only clear-cut anti-fascist entity on their horizon - as well as the only clear-cut alternative to the unbearable social cul-de-sac into which capitalism had driven bourgeois democracies - was Soviet Russia. The young men must have felt very lonely, but they had an ideal.

This, by now, is the household version of the 1930s and of what happened. As an exercise in causality, it holds some water, although that water in turn tastes somewhat Marxist if only because of the underlying assumption that "conditions determine conscience". They do; but only up to a point after which conscience acquires autonomy, which is what distinguishes conscience from reflex. Beyond that point, an autonomous conscience is capable of turning tables on conditions, and of starting to determine them. That's the story of our species. But even if the aforementioned version of the 1930s is correct, this story somehow wasn't told to the bright young men in Cambridge.

On the whole, this version makes one wonder about the contemporary curriculum there. For no man in his right mind, or at least with a semester of political economy under his belt, can swallow the Marxist model of social justice, let alone its Soviet replica. It doesn't take a metaphysician to see that no matter how many pieces you cut a pie into, it won't grow bigger. The only difference this kind of redistribution of wealth makes is for those whose hands end up holding the knife.

The benefit of hindsight is not a precondition of sobriety, either: Keynes was denouncing Marxist economics as "an insult to our intelli-

gence", at a gathering of the Apostles, at exactly the time when both Blunt and Burgess were members. What this sobriety requires is a degree of familiarity with history, which, in the absence of ecclesiastical teaching, is our only available source for an ethical education. This is precisely what the Cambridge of the day failed to provide, and it is this failure, rather than the sinister designs of international communism or the intricate web of homosexual subculture that should be considered the origin of the Gang of Four (or more's) treachery.

What Penrose and Freeman elaborately describe as the political climate in Cambridge in



the 1930s seems to have been simply a climate of ignorance. Nobody seems to have told the young men of Cambridge, for instance, that killing in the name of a social ideal is a contradiction in terms, that it is still murder. The only ones in their generation to have learned this were those who returned from Spain alive. In purely quantitative terms, the spy-yield was, of course, quite insignificant. But it is small wonder that the inclusion among the Apostles of people who embraced the kind of tenets that Anthony Blunt, Guy Burgess and Michael Straight believed in has kept generations of counter-intelligence officers busy. For convictions made on such a low mental plane endan-

ger both national security and the ordinary pedestrian.

The odd thing about systems of social justice, Marxism included, is that they are always embraced far more eagerly by the middle and upper classes than by the purported beneficiaries. Workers tend to form unions, not parties; that is, affiliations based on a common professional and income-level denominator. By 1934, for example, the tentative date of Anthony Blunt's conversion, the idea of cutting employees in - ie, turning them into shareholders - was familiar enough in the United States to have rendered that conversion obsolete. Moreover, by 1934 de Lamennais's thesis about "co-operation instead of competition" was 100 years old. But then the fallacy inherent in the educated class's predilection for blue-printing social happiness lies in the self-congratulatory urge to promote a worker to one's own station, and the inability to imagine, let alone practise, the reverse. In terms of advancing the cause of a would-be better world, Blunt's conversion was a non-event; in terms of the real world, it was a small part of a large disaster. In this sense, Anthony Blunt was indeed a communist.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, which resulted in a drastic reduction in CP membership all over Europe and in Britain, produced no change in either Blunt's or Burgess's conviction. Nor did the outbreak of a war in which capitalist Britain found itself fighting fascist Germany while Soviet Russia was rapidly absorbing the Baltic States and half of Poland, in accordance with both the letter and the spirit of the Pact. Blunt's serenity on this score is explained by Penrose and Freeman with the suggestion that, having done his time as a talent-spotter for Comintern and Cominform (Hominform, in the American parlance of the day), he was well enough versed in the arcana of Marxist dialectics to regard the Pact as a smart tactical move by Stalin to gain the time necessary to prepare the Red Army for its eventual battle with fascism. (Never mind the human toll this move took of the German and Russian-occupied territories.)

This sounds plausible. But equally plausible is the notion that Blunt, an art historian, couldn't have cared less for Marxist doctrine in general or its dialectics in particular: that his talent-spotting and his subsequent spying for Comintern was done as a prank, as an indulgence of a proclivity for manipulating people, as a favour to a friend, or for want of anything else to do between his studies and

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carousing. Spying, after all, doesn't take up much time; the accompanying sense of danger was minimal enough to be exhilarating. It was risky, it was fun, and the future academic could see himself as a daredevil, as a tough. After all, he was exploiting the dynamics peculiar to any coterie: the tendency to gossip, the incestuous alliances, the fascination with guilty secrets — and what is a better way of becoming privy to a guilty secret than planting that guilty secret in someone else's head? Activities of this nature tend to snowball, however, and by the time Blunt was thirty-two — on September 1, 1939 — there were too many guilty secrets around and it was too late for him to be able to back out. If he cared at all about Marxist doctrine, it was about its application to visual art; and he duly and with fervour extolled the tenets of socialist realism while debunking works like Picasso's "Guernica" as bourgeois expressions of personal terror. If nothing else, the doctrine provided him with a new terminology. In his field, this was perceived as a cutting edge.

Stalin was gaining time, but so was Hitler. Besides, Hitler was not bumping off his generals. By June 22, 1941, when Germany attacked Russia, Blunt had already achieved the rank of captain, and had two years of working in MI5 behind him. It is fair to assume that everything he knew in that capacity was also known to his masters in the Moscow Centre. Still, the German invasion of Russia turned out to be a boon for anybody spying for Russia, since the Soviet Union thus became a British ally, and that should have cleared a spy's conscience considerably. Under the circumstances, Blunt could see himself as genuinely contributing to both the British and the Russian war effort. He thus had the comfort of thinking that his cause, to use Comrade Stalin's word out of context, was "just", if a bit redundant, since in the capacity of an ally, the British government supplied the Soviet Union with intelligence material anyway.

To all intents and purposes, Blunt continued to enjoy this peace of mind throughout the entire war, and so, presumably, did his fellow spies. For all their known and unknown quantity, however, the Moscow Centre's pickings were fairly slim, judging only by the number of convoys lost in the waters of the North Atlantic. It is perhaps during the final stages of the war and its immediate aftermath that these bright Cambridge men proved their usefulness, allowing Stalin to outmanoeuvre his Western counterparts in the liberated countries of Eastern Europe with a reasonably detailed Who's Who of the politicians and resistance groups backed by London. To assume this is as natural as to hope for the opposite.

Penrose and Freeman don't indulge in this sort of speculation. They are prevented by the wealth of material they have to sort out and by focusing on their subject, who, as a spy, fades against the background consisting of Burgess, Maclean and Philby. The background is painted very thoroughly, however, and the doubts that sometimes engulf its figures are no more than evening shadows. On the whole, one forms an impression that, though relatively ineffectual in the course of the Second World War, the Cambridge spies flourished in the climate of the Cold War which, like phytoplankton, they helped to facilitate to no small degree. Maclean's access to the British ambas-

sador's code and his participation in the tri-lateral Atomic Commission's decision-making process alone — not to mention Burgess and Philby — would be sufficient to stifle any mention of Blunt's name in the same breath as his. It may be that Blunt decided to quit MI5 after the war because he felt redundant — if not simply inferior — beside these comrades. Their activities could at least have provided him with an argument for persuading his controller to put him on ice for a while. Confessing in 1964, in exchange for immunity from prosecution, he confessed very little — not only because the immunity deal made him, as it were, the master of the situation (now it was up to him to choose what to tell to his interrogators and what to stay silent about), but also because he had rather little to reveal. Besides, if what Penrose and Freeman recount about his sexual habits is true, Blunt wasn't a man given to brooding or retrospection. At his core, he was a homosexual dandy and a product of a familiarly garbled reading of G. E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* (unlike Maclean, who was so influenced by J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* that later on, when he ended up in Moscow and had to live under an assumed name, he became Mark Petrovich Frazer), with its emphasis on the indefinability of the good, on aesthetic enjoyment and personal attachment. Add to that the Marxist cant about internationalism, and E. M. Forster's high camp dictum about hoping to have his friends to betray his country rather than his friends, and you'll get what the meek transcend loyalty to the nation; you'll at least get Blunt's reticence in his 1964 confession.

On the other hand, the counter-intelligence section of MI6 is no Holy Inquisition either: it deserved no better than it got. The tune it heard from Blunt it knew by heart. What the Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures supplied them with was — in all kindness — pure lyrics. But then confession is essentially an exercise in self-therapy and, at best, its purpose is to manipulate the outer — not to mention the inner — authority into a more benevolent disposition towards the sinner, whether in the short run or in the afterlife. Blunt was more interested in the short run. Thirteen years after Burgess and barely a year after Philby ended up in Moscow, Blunt had a choice between being elegiac, matter-of-fact, or epic. Judging by the amount of space allotted by Penrose and Freeman to the others, Blunt elected the minor key.

The epic genre, as Blunt knew, could have cost him his skin. For Kim Philby cuts a far more substantial figure than Burgess, Maclean and Blunt together, if only on the strength of his having apparently masterminded the world oil crisis. There can be little doubt that the idea of controlling the Eastern Mediterranean and Arabian Peninsula's oil fields was suggested to the Moscow Centre from the outside. Up until the Suez Crisis in 1956, the Mediterranean Basin, the Red Sea and North Africa never constituted a political — let alone economic — reality for Russia. The farthest Russia ever wanted to reach in that direction was the Dardanelles, and that more out of its traditional animosity towards Turkey than for any practical purposes. The interest, in other words, was largely of a didactic nature, not a product of a functional, coherent policy.

The Suez crisis marks the beginning of the Soviet presence in this region — a presence whose initial success and whose purpose were equally baffling. The most widely aired contemporary opinion ascribed these moves to the traditional antisemitic sentiment of the Soviet government, now taking the form of a pro-Arab stance, with its attendant anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist sloganeering. The relative benefit of hindsight, however, while not challenging the essence of this interpretation, lies in providing a literal interpretation to what was perceived as cant: the move was indeed anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist, in the sense that it aimed to deprive the Western industrialized world of its main raw material, oil. As far as the ABC of Marxist thought is concerned, this was like saying "A".

Now, the reason that that "A" could not have been first uttered in Moscow is that in order to make such an utterance, one must at least know the ways in which industrial democracies operate, their basic needs and dependencies. At that time (the last years of Stalin, the first of Khrushchev), this knowledge was beyond the Politburo's level of competence.

They barely managed their own country. Even if it were possible to imagine the existence within the hierarchy of an expert sufficiently enterprising or dogmatic to have such an insight, he would still have had to work the implementation of this idea through one or two members of the Politburo, and to a member of that illustrious body the keeper of such an idea would seem to have a threatening degree of edge. Such were the days. Besides, the thought wouldn't have occurred to a Russian, because Russia itself is enormously oil-rich.

It must have come from the outside, and it reflects good old imperial thinking (filling a vacuum, etc). Given the almost total lack of previous communist activity in the region, the success of the initial Soviet steps could be attributed either to the sheer novelty of their faces in the Arab world or to some dormant network being activated. As for the second option, the network couldn't have been either German (since Ghelien sold the entire thing at the root level to the Americans), or French (as the inhabitants of French territories, down to the darkest *pled not*, are always staunchly loyal to France). This leaves us with only one alternative, and it is quite possible that in the period 1955 to 1963 the locals who worked for Kim Philby, then stationed in Beirut, thought that they were advancing the cause of the British Empire. Once Kim, always Kim.

Like all visionary designs, in the end this great scheme backfired. Still, improvements for the local population were noticeable enough to soothe a latter-day Lawrence of Arabia's conscience — if he remembers the word. But if, as Penrose and Freeman tell us, "the intelligence world is pragmatic rather than moral", then Philby has nothing to worry about in his Moscow abode save his waistline or whether it is indeed next to John Reed that his ashes will end up in the Kremlin Wall. But how pragmatic is it? Not very, to judge by this exhaustive account of its failures. This world is at its most pragmatic when it comes to covering its shining derriere: towards that end it uses all sorts of material, though it clearly prefers government paper, things like the Official Secrets Act. It is a highly provincial world, too, and it looks up to art historians, nuclear scientists, members of parliament, aristocrats, and heirs to fortune — that is, it shares and revels in public fantasies, including the one about itself. We may say that the depth of provincialism, the intensity of these fantasies, is what a society pays for its structural rigidity, the way it pays for the homogeneity of its ideas about the outside world.

In 1950, on the eve of his departure for the United States, Guy Burgess, this indefatigable bohemian spanner constantly in search of a delicate piece of intelligence machinery, was advised by his friends to watch his flamboyant act while in America. He was told that he "should avoid discussions about communism, homosexuality, and the colour bar". Burgess is said to have replied, "What you are trying to say in your nice, long-winded way is: Guy, for God's sake don't make a pass at Paul Robeson." Nice crack, but the essence of that warning points to the non-existence of an American equivalent of an educated class, either in the 1930s, or later. In terms of education, as well, America produces not a class but a mass; and with the absence of a class, you can't develop an intellectual fashion, nor can you home in on a political group, no matter how left-oriented. At the time, it would presumably have distressed Cambridge left-wing youths to learn that their American counterparts were mostly New York Jews (who, on top of that, were mostly Trotskyites). But it explains why there was less spying for Russia from those with a college degree. This, too, explains why Burgess had to die in Moscow: his ideas about the 'outside world', regardless of his social radius and the sort of secrets he was privy to, owed everything to the homogeneity of his milieu, not to mention its homosexuality. The other name for the phenomenon is, of course, insularity.

That he, Blunt, Maclean and Philby could wreak such havoc within British intelligence, that the public still, more than three decades after they ceased to be operational, must be shielded by the Official Secrets Act from assessing the actual damage, betrays the romantic, if not pragmatic mentality of the service. Secret intelligence is normally fond of regard-

ing itself as the brain or nerve-centre of the nation: it is equally fond of presenting this image to the general public. In the circumstances, the best thing that can be said about the situation is that Whitehall plays a tough skull to its sensitive brain's MI5 and MI6 hemispheres.

Demythologizing the service is a task long overdue: it is about time for life to start imitating art (here, that of fiction), at least on this score. This has already happened to the public notion of the police — we know how corrupt and unreliable the police can be, yet we are not any less safe for that. To learn about someone's limitations is to learn about your own responsibility. In short, a nation shouldn't put much trust in intelligence. A nation, if it wants to survive, must rely on its muscle, fortitude, on the strength and impregnability of its defense mechanism. "Mechanism" is the key word here, for machines are built because they are more reliable and replaceable than ourselves.

Governments fall for intelligence because governments are cost-conscious. True, a maintain such a service is much cheaper than to build a dreadnought or a silo. But the difference between a dreadnought and a spy is that the former can't turn self-destructive, or ask to be loved in a peculiar way. No matter how precise the adversary's information may be about this vessel's speed, fire-power and type of steel, when it comes to the rub, a dreadnought is a deterrent. For the information obtained through espionage is one-dimensional: its relation to reality is that of a photograph or picture. (In some abstract, retroactive way, Blunt was an ideal spy as Surveyor of the King's or Queen's Pictures.) With luck, and with a good network, with traitors or fellow-travellers, the best that your adversary may end up with is a family album (of blueprints, of defence installations, of launch-pads, and of chemical formulae). The photograph, however, by definition, is an object's yesterday. What does both a spy and his spy-master is the passage of time and the three-dimensionality of the real depicted.

If this biography fails to reconstruct Blunt, it is not so much because of its authors' division of labour, as because he was eminently replaceable, or, to put it more accurately and more generously, totally lost. He was a good example of what is known as negative reality. No amount of weekly calls from his controller, or books and lectures delivered at the Com-tauld, no volume of rough or gentle trade could give him substance. Did he have blood on his hands, has he shortened some lives, and how many? To assume that, yes, he has, would be more prudent than to believe otherwise, although to answer in detail — in some detail, anyway — one would have to refer to File No 383.7-14.1 of the Ministry of Defence, safe from public eyes behind the Official Secrets Act.

Unlike many a Briton who dies in order to see his memoir or diary printed, Blunt, for obvious reasons, never took notes. Those who outlived him won't be generous with their recollections, either. He will become — as for some he has already — "that traitor Blunt". The Ministry of Defence files of both "hemispheres" will be — if they are not already doctored in a similar spirit. As for the Soviet GRU (General Intelligence Directorate), its archives are the closest thing to the afterlife one can approach in this incarnation.

*East-West Tension in the Third World* edited by Marshall D. Shulman (243pp. The American Assembly, Columbia University and W. W. Norton. £14.95. 0 393 30337 3) is a collection of the background papers prepared by the participants in the Seventeenth American Assembly, co-sponsored by the W. Averell Harriman Institute for Advanced Study of the Soviet Union, convened at Arden House in Harriman, New York on November 21, 1985. The published papers are the following: "East-West Tensions in Africa" by David E. Albright, "US, Soviet and Cuban Policies towards Latin America" by Jorge I. Domínguez, "Military Aspects of US-Soviet Competition in the Third World" by Francis Fukuyama, "The Soviet-American Rivalry in Asia" by Donald S. Zagora, "US-Soviet Rivalry in the Middle East" by William B. Quandt, and "East-West Economic Competition in the Third World" by Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier.

## Seen in the distorting mirror

Julian Symons

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"The man's an Englishman, and if he's in with Germany he's a traitor to us, and we as Englishmen have a right to expose him. If we can't do it without spying we've a right to spy." An Englishman spying for Germany, the ingenious Davies says to the equally unsophisticated Carruthers in *The Riddle of the Sands*, is the vilest creature on God's earth. Davies' views, expressed very clearly in the twentieth century, were those of his early Erskine Childers. There is an enormous gap between that simple concept of "the spy" as patriot or traitor according to his nationality, and the modern intelligence agency. Romantic patriotism drives Davies and Carruthers to become spies in this particular case, but they are aware of engaging in a low sneaking activity unfit for honourable men. Those who work today for American, British, French, Israeli and East European intelligence agencies no doubt see themselves as patriots, but the power that moves them is often that of an egotism so extreme as to be almost pathological. The patriotism of Davies and Carruthers has nothing in common with that of E. Howard Hunt, who was the CIA's contact with the exiled Cubans during the Bay of Pigs operation, and part of the "plumbers" unit whose activities were responsible for the disaster of Watergate. Hunt's patriotism belongs to the fantasy world of the action comic.

Fantasy has been a constant element of intelligence work, from the time that government-funded agencies of a modern kind, concerned with gathering information about other countries, were set up early in the twentieth century. (Earlier intelligence organizations, like Fouché's network of spies in revolutionary France, were mostly concerned with internal security.) The opening chapters of Philip Knightley's *The Second Oldest Profession* abound with "characters", like Captain Mansfield Smith-Cumming, first head of MI-1c which preceded MI6, who wore a gold-rimmed monocle, used only green ink for letters, and after losing a leg in an accident propelled himself along Whitehall corridors on a child's scooter which contained also his detached wooden leg. Cumming, called "C", favoured disguises, and so did other agents of the period like Paul Dukes, named by Knightley as the most successful British agent in Russia during the First World War and the October Revolution. Dukes adopted many roles after the Revolution: employee of the Cheka, Red Army soldier, and delegate to the Petrograd Soviet among them. He was a courageous man, whose life was often at risk, and the information he sent back was interesting and important, yet the prevailing impression one has of him is of a man playing games, with himself and the authorities to whom he gave allegiance.

No doubt the fact that pretence and secrecy are vital elements of intelligence work affects the personalities of those employed in it. The hero of Joan Miller's *One Girl's War* is Maxwell Knight, a wartime head of MI5, described by her as enigmatic, hypnotic and debonaire, his impotence being responsible for the non-consummation. In course of time she learned that his three marriages were similarly unfulfilled, and that he was homosexual, antisemitic, and interested in black magic. It is clear that Knight would not have survived positive

vetting, but that an injunction should be placed on publication of these ladylike reminiscences is remarkable, unless they are thought to show all intelligence work in a bad light. And fantasy rules still. Does Lord Casterton's death through the agency of an exploding cigar in William Le Queux's *England's Peril* (1900) seem preposterous? Something like it was planned by the CIA after the failure of the Bay of Pigs. An exploding seashell placed on the sea floor where Castro swam, the impregnation of a wet-suit with poison, and a poison pen device were all considered. The wet-suit was duly coated with poison provided by Dr Gottlieb of the CIA's Technical Services Division, but it never reached Castro. Le Queux might have rejected as too outlandish another CIA idea, that of dusting Castro's shoes with thallium salts which would cause his beard to fall out, and thus destroy his charisma. Yet there have been times when fantasy turned into such a reality as the murder of a Bulgarian dissident by a thrust from a poison-tipped umbrella. To read of such successes is disconcerting. It is as though a child's game about goodies killing baddies, or in this case a baddy killing a goody, had become real.

Philip Knightley's and John Ranelagh's books both emphasize, the second perhaps without intention, the curious insulation from ordinary life of those who live within the intelligence world. Knightley's book comes up to date with an examination of the case against Sir Roger Hollis as a possible Soviet "mole", but its primary value is as a concise, clearly arranged history of the activities of intelligence organizations in this century, concentrating particularly on SIS (for which most of us will still read MI6), the CIA and the KGB. John Ranelagh's monumental history of the CIA contains much documentation and intricate historical detail absent from Knightley, and William Blum's *The CIA: A forgotten history* is a relentless listing of the Agency's overt and covert interventions in the affairs of other countries from China in 1945 up to El Salvador and Nicaragua at present. Blum is distinctly partial, as comparisons of his accounts of various operations with those given by Ranelagh show, and he is given to rhetoric that does not help what is sometimes a well-presented argument. "Thus it was that . . . the pipe-smoking, comfortable men of Princeton, Harvard and Wall Street, decided that the illiterate peasants of Guatemala did not deserve the land which had been given to them", etc.

Intelligence agencies are staffed by men and women almost all of whom are working conscientiously in the service of their country, yet within that general remit they play intricate games involving rivalries, suspicions and deceptions, games in which nobody can be assumed to be telling the truth. Was Sir Roger Hollis just what he seemed as Director of MI5? Was he a mole planted many years earlier by the KGB? Or should we suppose a further degree of subtlety and think that Hollis was the originator of or party to an MI5 plan to make the KGB believe he was one of "theirs" while remaining in fact faithfully "ours"? It is in the nature of things that there can be no evidence about such things that would be given credence by a court, for it will be contradicted by other "evidence" of the same haziness. And once the chief bureaucrats of intelligence have been placed under suspicion, why should politicians be exempt? Under Hollis's successor, what Knightley calls the Young Turks of intelligence may have investigated Prime Minister Harold Wilson and his entourage, bugging their telephones, burgling their houses. One says "may have", but there was no doubt about the burglaries, little about the buggings. Lord Gardiner, then Lord Chancellor, talked about confidential matters only in his car, feeling sure that there at least what he said would not be overheard. The suspicions of the Young Turks and their American counterparts seem so preposterous that nobody living in the real world could credit them for five minutes, but intelligence agents inhabit a universe of their own. It resembles that of G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, although in Chesterton's fable all the anarchists turn out to be policemen, while for a Young Turk every policeman is under suspicion of being an anarchist. It is not surprising that so many of those connected with intelligence write stories based on the world of distorting mirrors they lived in, where

every looking glass showed a deceitful reflection. Allbeury, Bingham, le Carré, Charles McCarty, are only the beginning of a long list that includes both Maxwell Knight and E. Howard Hunt.

Life among the distorting mirrors has caused anguish to the subtlest minds. James Angleton, for many years chief of American counter-intelligence, became totally convinced that a KGB defector named Golitsyn was genuine. He had supplied valuable and authentic information, and this made plausible his positive assertions that the SIS, the CIA and the French service were all penetrated by Soviet moles. Golitsyn threw in for good measure a few suggestions like one about Hugh Gaitskill having been poisoned to make way for the more desirable (in Soviet terms) Harold Wilson. Again, much of what he said would seem self-evident to anybody outside intelligence circles. Angleton swallowed it all, and it comes as no surprise that another American counter-intelligence officer, totting up gains and losses, revelations and concealments, decided that the chief American mole being protected through this confusing Soviet defections was Angleton himself. The story is told by Ranelagh and, more caustically, by Knightley. In due course Angleton was forced to resign.

The most disturbing thing about these games of who's-got-the-button is that they spill over into the real world, sometimes with devastating results. In the late 1960s and early 70s the CIA spent a great deal of money to keep Salvador Allende out of power in Chile, giving funds to his opponents, financing direct propaganda campaigns, and others using disinformation (for which read misinformation) techniques. Richard Helms, then Director of the CIA, was instructed by the President to "make the economy scream", and did so. All in vain. Allende was elected. A CIA man, David Atlee Phillips, was then put in charge of a CIA Task Force, and told to arrange a military coup. Phillips, giving evidence to the Church Committee on Alleged Assassination Plots, said he was wor-

ried by the instruction. Allende had been democratically elected, there was no realistic alternative to him, Chile had a "solid functioning democratic tradition". Was it right, "even responding to a President's ukase", to try to organize a rebellion that nobody, not even the Chilean military, wanted? But these were later pieties, uttered after the coup had succeeded, a General who refused to support it had been murdered, and Allende had been killed or committed suicide. Straight-faced denials were then the order of the day. Assassination, Helms said, had never been an option. Phillips thanked God that the CIA had "discouraged" the General's killers. Kissinger and Alexander Haig disengaged themselves from what had happened, Haig's "distinct impression" being that the CIA had been told to "cease and desist" after Allende's election. Ranelagh, equally straight-faced, agrees that neither the CIA nor its agents were "actually involved" in the coup. In his opening chapter Ranelagh asks what a CIA man would do to defend American interests, and calls the answer that Agency men evolved "very sophisticated". It might also be called very evasive, involving as it did juggling with terms like "qualitative ethic" and "democratic sanction", while taking the view that in practice "ends justified means . . . and all means were available". For most Agency men action ordered by their superiors came first, tears and ethics later. And Ranelagh provides much evidence that many of them enjoyed the action, although that is not the way he puts it.

Are intelligence services necessary? The remark, attributed to Khrushchev, that nothing would be lost by either Western or Communist countries if all intelligence operations ceased, no doubt has a basis of truth. Knightley casts doubt on the value of what may be regarded as the greatest achievements, such as the breaking of the Enigma code and Sorge's accurate warning sent from Japan about the impending invasion of the Soviet Union. The latter was simply disregarded by Stalin because he did not

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want to believe it, and the value of the former was vitiated by the need not to let the Germans know the code had been broken. Yet the delectable operation carried out in Chile was successful, and if politicians feel that "all means are available" for influencing assassination and the use of disinformation, then they will continue. To say, as Ranelagh does, that "if Congress does not like them, Congress can stop" such activities is merely naïve. If Congress, or Parliaments in other countries, stop such operations by public order they will be carried out with even more secrecy, with total disclaimers from politicians who desire the ends but do not want to know about the means. The fantasists in the field are delighted to have freedom of action. They are what Nixon's CIA Director William Colby called dangerously self-directed.

The recent revelations about Peter Wright and Colonel North emphasized the need for political control to be exercised, and acknowledged, over such self-directed men. The opposition to such conscious political control inside the intelligence community is intense, as was shown in America during Stansfield Turner's attempt during the Carter presidency to cut the claws of the CIA, reduce its numbers,

and rely on technical expertise rather than colourful and irresponsible characters playing their hunches. Turner was the Director most detested inside the Agency, and Reagan on becoming President quickly replaced him with William Casey, who restored the CIA to its former role of "holding the bag for the politicians" as one of them put it, with the unwritten power that implies. But the Turner approach was right, the unacknowledged autonomy given to intelligence services by which they may bug, steal and murder, wrong. The Peter Wright and Colonel North cases show, in their different ways, the overwhelming need for direct and acknowledged political control over the romantics, paranoids and fantasists, all on the lookout for traitors visible in the distorting mirrors, who will always make up a large part of any intelligence service. No doubt many of them feel they are doing the state some service as they seek through deceit and murder to maintain corrupt but friendly régimes, and destroy those that may be honest but are certainly hostile. Yet by the very nature of their actions "in the process something is betrayed" (to adapt Donald Davie's line), and the betrayal is precisely, that of the civilization they are seeking to defend.

## Aristocrat in the know

Anthony Glees

**PATRICK HOWARTH**  
*Intelligence Chief Extraordinary: The life of the ninth Duke of Portland*  
256pp. Bodley Head, £15.  
0 370 305728

The 9th Duke of Portland, Bill Cavendish-Bentinck, has not hitherto been associated in the public mind with the secret intelligence world and one might be excused for assuming from the title of this racy little book that Patrick Howarth's subject was a Director General of MI5 or a "C" of MI6. In fact, Cavendish-Bentinck's period as "Intelligence Chief Extraordinary" constituted a comparatively small, though clearly very interesting, period of his life when he served during the Second World War not in "S" or "G" but as Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the body charged with collating intelligence for the Chiefs of Staff.

Cavendish-Bentinck was appointed to the British Legation in Christiania in June 1915; thirty-two years later he was somewhat squally dismissed from the Foreign Service by Ernest Bevin after admitting adultery in a London divorce court. "I could have saved Bill if his name had been Smith", one of Bevin's private secretaries told Howarth, but at the same time one cannot help thinking that if his name really had been Smith, he would hardly have had such a remarkable and varied career. There is, it seems, a price to be paid for everything.

For Cavendish-Bentinck was lucky enough not merely to get posts in interesting places but to get almost all of them at very critical times. In 1919, for example, he was sent to the fledgling Polish Republic; then, in 1925, he was appointed to the League of Nations Department of the Foreign Office and became the junior member of the British Delegation to the Locarno Conference. Finally, in 1945, Eden appointed Cavendish-Bentinck British Ambassador to Poland, where he became a witness to the destruction of its democracy by the Russians and Polish Communists.

The book itself is not an authorized biography but is constructed around a considerable number of verbatim statements in the first person which (one has no reason to doubt this) emanate from the Duke of Portland himself, now in his ninetieth year. Yet although it is noteworthy (and good news for historians of intelligence affairs) that Cavendish-Bentinck has been prepared to go on the record about his time on the JIC, thus technically infringing the Official Secrets Act, he has not given away very much.

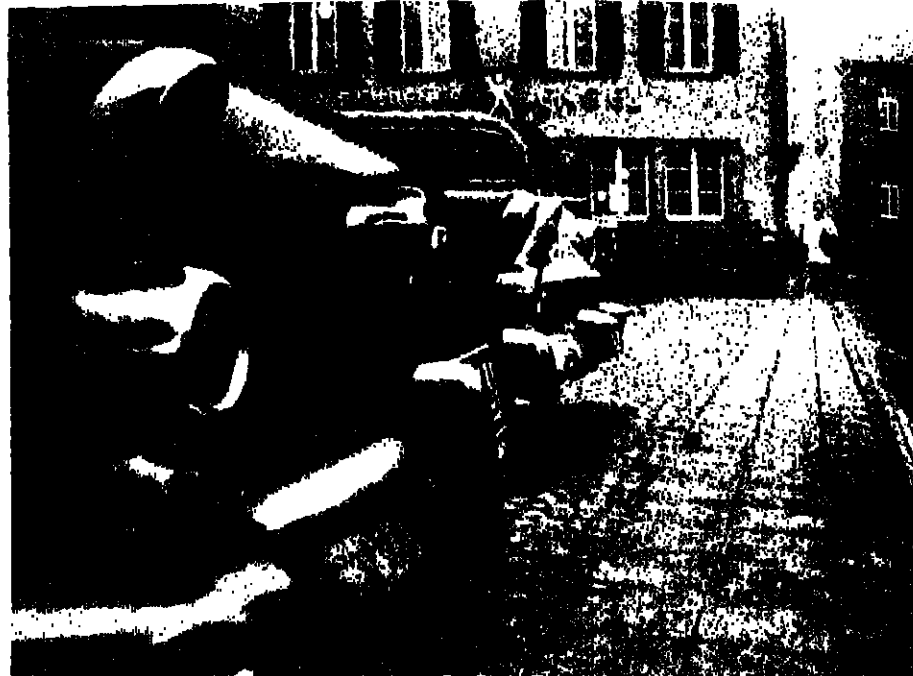
Bentinck was appointed to the JIC in 1939 with the rank of counsellor (a relatively low grading), becoming Assistant Under Secretary only in 1944 (after 1945 the job became one for

an Under Secretary, reflecting the importance that was increasingly being attached to intelligence). What Bentinck and Howarth tell us about this period is unlikely to change accepted views on the role that intelligence played in defeating the Nazis: Churchill, though equipped with a voracious appetite for intelligence, got it either directly from "C" or via his friend Desmond Morton and showed little interest in the JIC. Consequently the JIC's doubts about certain of his policies (for example on unconditional surrender, which it thought would stiffen German resistance) were ignored. As for its anxieties about the Soviet Union, "upon Soviet policy the JIC was not at this stage called upon to comment".

Cavendish-Bentinck does, however, reveal some new evidence about the Communist moles. He provides the first "official" confirmation that Anthony Blunt attended JIC meetings (something alleged by Andrew Boyle but concealed by Blunt in his celebrated *Times* interview). "He struck me", Bentinck recalls, "as being rather a dull dog." As for Philby, he could only remember having met him on one occasion (it must have been far more often). "I met Philby once when he came to a JIC meeting. I recollect saying to the room 'that's a queer fish'." Guy Burgess, he tells us, he met "twice". The point of all this, of course, is not that the admission of these individuals to the most secret corners of Whitehall meant they might have influenced the making of high policy but rather that they knew some of Britain's best secrets and plainly had greater authority within their organizations than has been admitted. What is more, such authority would doubtless have enabled them to help develop "low" policy, policy on the issues that cabinet ministers did not want to bother with. This is a story that still needs to be told.

Howarth (who himself served under Bentinck in Poland after the war) provides many useful snippets of information, but often, perhaps rather too often, a historically illuminating comment is avoided for a Bentinckian anecdote. This is a shame. For one thing, he makes Bentinck out to be something of an odd buffer (an impression reinforced by an extremely odd snapshot of him inspecting Auschwitz after the war). For another, just because Bentinck said it, does not mean it is significant.

On the other hand, some of the anecdotes are very funny indeed (by far the best is one linking the all-night love-making of a Romanian couple with the French occupation of the Ruhr and the first Nazi martyr, Horst Wessel). *Intelligence Chief Extraordinary's* flaws are chiefly of concern to the specialist; it has no footnotes and sources are not given. Yet even the ordinary reader may well feel there ought to be a bit more to say about the life-story of such an apparently perceptive and influential figure in British foreign policy-making.



"Gasthaus 'Goldener Engel', Baumholder", 1959, is taken from René Burri's *Die Deutschen Photographieren 1957-1964* with text by Hans Magnus Enzensberger (208pp. Munich: Schirmer/Moelch DM39.80, 3 88814 161 3).

## An informant honoured

Michael R. Marrus

**WALTER LAQUEUR and RICHARD BREITMAN**  
*Breaking the Silence*  
296pp. Bodley Head, £12.95.  
0 370 31013 6

On August 10, 1942, the American Embassy in Bern sent a shattering telegram to London and Washington from Dr Gerhart Riegner, representative of the World Jewish Congress in Switzerland:

RECEIVED ALARMING REPORT THAT IN THE FUHRER'S HEADQUARTERS PLAN DISCUSSED AND UNDER CONSIDERATION ACCORDING TO WHICH ALL JEWS IN COUNTRIES OCCUPIED OR CONTROLLED GERMANY NUMBERING THREE AND A HALF TO FOUR MILLIONS SHOULD AFTER DEPORTATION AND CONCENTRATION IN EAST BE EXTERMINATED AT ONE BLOW RESOLVE ONCE AND FOR ALL THE JEWISH QUESTION IN EUROPE STOP THE ACTION REQUESTED PLANNED FOR AUTUMN METHODS UNDER DISCUSSION INCLUDING PRUSSIC ACID STOP WE TRANSMIT INFORMATION WITH ALL RESERVATION AS EXACTITUDE CANNOT BE CONFIRMED STOP INFORMANT STATED TO HAVE CLOSE CONNECTIONS WITH HIGHEST GERMAN AUTHORITIES AND HIS REPORTS GENERALLY SPEAKING RELIABLE.

Coming at a time when reports of massacres of Jews in Eastern Europe were accumulating, this message was nevertheless one of the very first suggesting that all European Jews were targeted for murder. It has chilling verisimilitude, in retrospect, because of its reference to "prussic acid, the poison gas used at Auschwitz."

We have learnt a good deal, in recent books, about the circumstances surrounding this telegram—the dilatory reception by the American State Department; the alarm spread in Britain by Jews and non-Jews; and the mounting pressure for action, culminating in a solemn international declaration on December 17, co-ordinated by officials in London, Moscow and Washington, denouncing "this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination". But until the publication of *Breaking the Silence* we have not known the identity of the mysterious informant mentioned in the cable. Few of those who originally relayed the information survive, and Riegner was apparently sworn to secrecy.

After ingenious detective work and extensive interviews with first-hand witnesses, Laqueur and Breitman discovered the name of the industrialist and his hair-raising story. The informant was Eduard Schulte, the leading executive of one of Germany's most important mining and metallurgical firms, Georg von Giesecke's Huls. An anti-Nazi who maintained his position in the company after Hitler took power, Schulte was outraged by the régime, and felt the Nazis were leading Germany to disaster. After the outbreak of war, he

began to pass important information to the West as a way of opposing the Hitlerian dictatorship. Traveling frequently to Switzerland on business, he made contact with Polish and Swiss intelligence operatives, and later dealt directly with Allen Dulles, sent to Bern in November 1942 to organize the American Office of Strategic Services Mission in Switzerland. Dulles thought highly of Schulte, recommending him to Washington as a promising German who could help rebuild his country after the war.

Head of an industrial conglomerate of great importance to the Third Reich, Schulte was extraordinarily well informed about the Nazi war machine. With its headquarters in Breslau, Giesecke had extensive holdings in Poland, and dealt regularly with military officials to whom it supplied vital raw materials. One of Schulte's principal lieutenants at Giesecke, Otto Filzow, became chief of the civilian administration of Upper Silesia, and brought his boss into regular contact with his good friend Karl Hanke, a garrulous, fanatical Nazi who was Governor and governor of Lower Silesia. Schulte was also in touch with anti-Nazi elements in German military intelligence, the Abwehr, through his unpolitical cousin Hermann.

The authors provide a sympathetic, well-crafted picture of Schulte in his separate roles of business man, intelligence agent, international traveller, and Central European gentleman. Handicapped since 1909, when he lost a leg in an accident, Schulte was reserved, dignified, and apparently left few clues about his innermost thoughts. His tastes were conventional: hunting, grand hotels, good food, and a proper club. He was solicitous of his mistress and loyal to his wife. He lived well, but not ostentatiously. He detested the Nazis as gangsters. He had no special interest in Jews, but his support for them apparently sprang from the same probity and courage with which he approached much else in life.

Enlightening on so many details, *Breaking the Silence* still leaves important issues unexplored. Schulte's reserve, I sense, prevented the authors from learning more about the character of his anti-Naziism and what brought him to act so courageously. Above all, we remain in the dark about Schulte's sense of the massacre of European Jews. Did he, for example, know about Auschwitz? Martin Gilbert's *Auschwitz and the Allies* argued persuasively that the huge death-camp, the largest in the Nazis' system, remained secret until the spring of 1944. But Auschwitz was in Upper Silesia, where Schulte's connections were strong. The camp was adjacent to Katowice, where the Giesecke firm had a villa, donated to the local *Gauleiter*. Himmler stopped at the villa at least twice, on visits to Auschwitz where he actually witnessed the killing process. Did Schulte learn there what Professor Laqueur, in another book, has called "the terrible secret"? Unfortunately, we may never know.

## Light on particles

John Roche

**ABRAHAM PAIS**  
*Inward Bound: Of matter and forces in the physical world*  
637pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press, £17.50.  
0 19 851971 0  
**RICHARD P. FEYNMAN**  
*QED: The strange theory of light and matter*  
158pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £13.40.  
0 691 08388 6

*Inward Bound* is a detailed history of particle physics from the discovery of X-rays and the electron, late last century, to the exotic particles recently discovered at CERN. Abraham Pais is a distinguished and cultured senior physicist who has made many important contributions to the field he describes. It is rare indeed to find a professional physicist who combines such historical accomplishment, a lucid and refreshing style and a deep and relaxed understanding of his subject-matter. The primary scientific sources and secondary historical literature have been thoroughly examined at every step. As in his earlier book on Einstein, *Subtle is the Lord*, Pais is on occasion humorous, shocking, conversational, colloquial and a raconteur, or he slips into an imaginary dialogue with his reader. He introduces very sharp vignettes of Sir J. J. Thomson, Rutherford, Bohr, Pauli, Oppenheimer, Fermi and many others. Throughout, he provides shrewd and illuminating comments on experimental practice and theory construction and on current theories in the philosophy of scientific discovery.

Expanding on this last theme Pais writes, "After decades spent in the midst of the fray I am more than ever convinced... that a search for all-embracing principles of discovery makes about as much sense as looking for the crystal structure of muddled waters!" Nevertheless, he himself offers some clues as to what might be termed a natural history of modes of exploration and discovery in science. He provides numerous instances of multiple simultaneous discoveries. He asserts that "Progress in science depends vitally on a backlog of experimental data in need of interpretation". He remarks frequently on the "pitfalls" and on the "necessary evil" of simplicity as a guiding principle of explanation. Referring to the impact of Special and General Relativity on mechanics and on the theory of gravity, Pais remarks that "It was at once clear that classical physics emerged unscathed by these innovations as long as one defined, with greater precision than before, its domain of validity". It is surely high time that popular writers stopped declaring that modern physics "overthrew" classical physics.

Anyone who is used to the kinds of explanation to be found in classical physics will follow

well enough Pais's accounts of the discovery of X-rays, the electron, radioactivity, the proton, the nucleus, the neutron, the neutrino and the subsequent flood of elementary particles which were discovered when the atomic nucleus was subjected to ever more violent bombardment. There are reasonably straightforward explanations also of particle mass, charge, energy, momentum, half-life, collision cross-section and spin. However, when properties such as "isospin", "parity" and "negative energy" appear in the narrative, classical understanding fails, nor is it at all easy to know what is meant here by "colour", "flavour" and "charm" as particle properties or states. Such "properties" seem to come from a rather opaque mathematical formalism in the first instance and although natural properties may indeed correspond to these terms, it is not at all clear how one could establish that they do so.

Pais provides a profound and exhaustive analysis of the origins of the mathematical theories which have been introduced throughout this century to explain and predict the interactions between subatomic particles, and I was struck by a remarkable difference between many of the mathematical laws of classical physics and those of modern quantum theory. We are told here on the best authority that the most important quantity which appears in the mathematical theory of the electron as formulated by Schrödinger, Dirac and the others, namely the "wave function", has no direct physical meaning. Furthermore, there seems to be no way in which the fundamental equations of this theory can be verified directly by experiment. If they have neither meaning nor measure how then can we be confident that these equations represent laws of nature? There are, of course, those who say (Pais is not of them) that the mathematical theories of modern physics are no more than recipes for organizing and predicting the phenomena. However, the tradition of explaining nature is very strong in physics and future generations of physicists will no doubt address themselves to

the challenge of incorporating particle physics into the domain of a common-sense rationality.

Richard Feynman's brief *QED* or "Quantum electrodynamics" is another *tour de force* by the acknowledged master of clear explanation in physics. In four short chapters he explains why the angles of incident and reflected light are equal, why light appears to be, but is not, reflected from the upper and lower faces of a glass, and why it appears to slow down when it passes through glass or water. He also explains, among many other things, why the magnetic strength of the spinning electron and proton are greater than a simple theory would predict. He concludes with what, for me, is the best classification and description to date of the many subnuclear particles which have been discovered this century.

*QED* is written for the serious-minded general reader as well as for the professional scientist, mathematician at a minimum, and the intention is to combine rigour with simplicity and clarity, which is surely exactly what is required if the intelligent non-scientist is ever again to participate with the scientist in understanding the secrets of a nature which is, after all, common to both. As we now expect of him, Feynman is eminently luminous, humorous and reasonable. However, he occasionally delivers himself of opinions which may be unacceptable to all but his most fervent admirers. He tells us that "a positron... is an electron going backwards in time... [and this is] what Nature is really doing...". "The theory of quantum electrodynamics describes Nature as absurd from the point of view of common sense. And it agrees fully with experiment. So I hope you can accept Nature as she is—absurd." He also informs us that physics has given up constructing theories which attempt to explain nature. A certain amount of healthy Cartesian doubt about such theories seems to be called for here, before we accept too hastily that nature is indeed absurd and share Feynman's gleeful despair.

## Of mice and men

Peter Atkins

**ROBERT SHAPIRO**  
*Origins: A sceptic's guide to the creation of life on earth*  
332pp. Heinemann, £12.95.  
0 434 69520 3

There are only two great problems for science. One is where the universe came from. The other is how it became aware of itself; that is, how some matter acquired such complexity of organization that it became able to reflect on its own origin, activity and destiny. Almost certainly these two great problems will turn out to be two faces of one, for unity is the nature of the truly great. Meanwhile we partition our investigations into fundamental particle physics and cosmology on the one hand, and into questions of the origin of life on the other, for currently the attainment of life is viewed as the vital step in the achievement of consciousness. It is still pure speculation as to whether, once it has been achieved, consciousness may dispense with the corporeal burdens of life, for we do not yet know, and might never be convinced, whether a computer will ever think that it is alive.

Robert Shapiro addresses one aspect of the second of these problems. He explores the attainment by inanimate matter of the ability to replicate itself imperfectly, replication being the prerequisite for propagation, and imperfection for evolution into structures ever more successful at domination. How and where did that first pregnant level of organization achieve itself?

Such questions have been addressed since speculation began, and the literature is rich in mythology. Shapiro argues that much of the science of our origins has for one reason or another not been treated with the scepticism that should be science's hallmark, and that much that is absorbed into our scientific consciousness, including even the technical literature of prebiotic chemistry, has taken root there more by a process of wishful thinking and a predisposition to believe than by hard-nosed questioning. He appoints himself as a super-referee, to decide whether the experimental results reported actually justify the conclusions they have inspired.

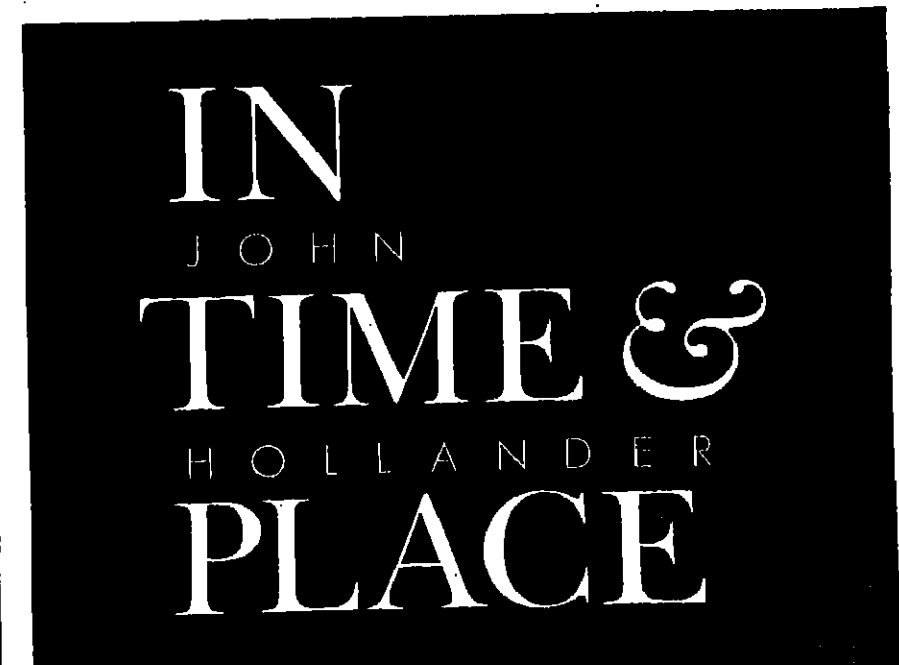
The theories he analyses embrace the obvious, such as van Helmont's procedure for generating mice from a mixture of wheat and sweaty underwear, as well as the less obvious, such as the view that we emerged from a cosmic soup. One of the most celebrated of modern experiments on our origins was that devised by Stanley Miller and Harold Urey, in which they

took a mixture of gases that was presumed to resemble the Earth's early atmosphere (whether it did is anyone's guess), created model thunderstorms, and then watched organic chemicals rain down. Some casual scientists saw the formation of certain amino-acids in this way as the event that enabled life, and leapt to the conclusion that since the experiment can be contrived to form a few of these essential compounds, life and we inevitably follow. Shapiro, however, is much more sceptical, and exposes the weaknesses in the chain of deduction that have led so many people to accept the importance of the Miller-Urey experiment. He argues that most of the product was tar, which could well have brought life to a sticky end before it was ever free to begin. Of the simpler substances detected in any abundance, only two are centrally important to life, and their detection was favoured by the design of the experiment. Moreover, the composition of the product bears no relation to even the simplest self-replicating system, a bacterium. The experiment may in fact be more relevant to the processes that occur in outer space, for the product resembles the composition of certain kinds of meteorite.

Shapiro goes on to argue that such building of biotic castles in the prebiotic air reflects an urge to extrapolate from a current system of belief, and hence to establish a mythology. Scientists are so anxious to show that their knowledge can lead to the synthesizing of life that they achieve the synthesis of one substance, presume it to be abundant, radically change the conditions, show that under certain circumstances they can form a little of the next substance, and in due course arrive within striking distance of life itself.

But all this need bring no comfort to the Creationists, whose false methods are also castigated by Shapiro's acid tongue. He makes the point, however, that "creation scientists" are actually doing science a service, for they are so concerned to expose the illogic of scientific deductions that they teach true scientists true scepticism.

This is an important, compelling and delightful book, for it performs two services. It analyses very clearly and simply the current state of knowledge on the emergence of life; and it is also a well-written exposition of the scientific method, where scepticism and honesty should reign supreme. However, I cannot refrain from being more sceptical than Shapiro's own *Skeptics*, who conjures with some unconvincing statistics in the middle of the book, and seems to wilt towards the end, where Shapiro's own speculative mythology begins to take the floor. But why not speculate? For without speculation, with only scepticism, science is sterile.



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0 19 503964 5

"Kurt Gödel's striking fundamental results in the decade 1929-1939 transformed mathematical logic and established him as the most important logician of the twentieth century." Solomon Feferman's opening characterization of Gödel's life and work is entirely accurate, and the publication of the first volume of his collected works should serve as an appropriate occasion for making his remarkable achievements more widely appreciated.

Gödel's far-reaching studies depended on a transformation of logic wrought almost exactly half a century earlier. In 1879, the German philosopher-mathematician Gottlob Frege devised a system for representing precisely the structure of deductive inferences. During the next two decades, Frege laboured to show how his new mathematical logic would suffice as a foundation for mathematics, how the concepts of mathematics could be defined using only logical notions and how the principles of mathematics could be deduced from the basic laws of logic. The attempt failed. Just before the publication of the second volume of his *magnum opus*, Frege learned from Bertrand Russell that his system of logic was inconsistent.

Russell had discovered a paradox not only for Frege's logic but also for the main attempts to develop classical mathematics. Ironically, in the efforts to understand the sources of paradox, many of the ideas that Frege had introduced into logic were recognized as enormously valuable. In the first decades of the twentieth century, many talented philosophers and mathematicians completed part of Frege's project, so that, by the middle of the 1920s, a consistent subsystem of Frege's logic had been isolated. This system, *first-order logic*, was extended or used in different ways by scholars interested in the problem of the foundations of mathematics. Gödel brought Hilbert's idea to a dénouement that was as fruitful as it was unanticipated.

Russell and Ernst Zermelo offered additional principles to the axioms of logic, and gave proofs of parts of mathematics within their extended systems. David Hilbert inaugurated a different programme, arguing that mathematical theories should be presented as formal systems based on logic. The resultant systems could be treated as purely mathematical objects, and the logician could then hope to use elementary mathematical reasoning (roughly the reasoning of ordinary arithmetic) to show that the systems had such desirable properties as consistency. Frege had begun the enterprise of constructing formal systems. Hilbert was the first to study such systems as objects of mathematics in their own right.

In 1929, at the age of twenty-three, he proved the most fundamental result about first-order logic. The language of first-order logic is developed by starting with a small set of logical expressions, and allowing ourselves infinitely many names and predicates. An interpretation of the language is given by assigning meanings to the names and predicates, and computing the truth or falsehood of sentences in the language in accordance with the rules that govern the behaviour of the logical expressions. Formulas in the language are said to be *logically valid* if they come out true under any admissible interpretation: thus the formula  $(\forall x)(Px \rightarrow Px)$ , which corresponds to the English "If everything is P then it is P", comes out as true no matter what meanings we give to the predicate P or the name x. What we want from a system of logic is a set of axioms and rules of inference that enables us to infer all those formulas that are valid, and none of those that fail to be valid. A system that has these properties is said to be both complete and sound. Demonstrating soundness is relatively straightforward. Gödel solved the problem of completeness.

Logicians had hoped for completeness in first-order logic and Gödel's theorem brought reassurance. But within two years, he pro-

duced a result that was far from anticipated, that had profound mathematical consequences, and that shattered the hopes of Hilbert's programme for the foundations of mathematics (at least in its original form). We construct formal mathematical systems by taking the axioms of first-order logic and adding some extra principles that embody the axioms of the particular part of mathematics in which we are interested. Again, we want the system to have two properties. One is consistency: there should be no statement A such that both A and not-A are derivable as theorems of the system. The other is (a different kind of) completeness: if A is a fully formed statement, then either A or not-A is true, and a complete system ought to decide the question for us by yielding the true one as a theorem. Gödel's first incompleteness theorem states that if a formal system for arithmetic, based on first-order logic, has a slightly stronger property than consistency ("omega" consistency) then it cannot be complete.

Gödel's proof of this result is extraordinarily ingenious. Noting that each symbol of the system can be assigned a number, he shows how one can then associate natural numbers with whole formulas and sequences of formulas. It then becomes possible to find expressions within the language that express particular properties, for example the property of being a formula, or an axiom, or a proof. Gödel then constructs a statement that "says" of itself "I am unprovable", and he shows that, if the system is consistent (in the slightly stronger sense) then neither this statement nor its negation can

## Objections overcome

Alan Chalmers

ROM HARRÉ  
*Varieties of Realism: A rationale for the Natural Sciences*  
375pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.  
0 631 12592 2

A realist account of science is easily constructed. The natural world exists independently of us and is the way it is whether we know it or not, or like it or not. The aim of science is to describe that world, its structure and mode of behaviour. Theories that do so successfully are true, those that do not are false. If modern physics is true, there really are electrons and electromagnetic fields and they behave in just the way that physics says they behave. The practical success of modern science is an indication of the degree to which it has been able to give true descriptions of the real world.

Perhaps there would be no reason to abandon this common-sense realism if it were not for the doubts that traditional philosophers and, more recently, sociologists have cast upon it. One source of doubt is provided by those empiricists who argue that, since all our knowledge must be based on experience, it is impossible for us to know anything beyond the realm of the senses. Science then becomes a useful tool for correlating observations. A second source of doubt is the notion of truth. Philosophers have been unable to spell out a relationship between revisable, socially constructed scientific claims and the real world they refer to which provides an explication of truth meeting the needs of the strict realist (Popper notwithstanding). In recent decades,

been proved.

Gödel's second incompleteness theorem asserts that the formula expressing the consistency of the system is unprovable within the system. In his paper of 1931, Gödel announced this conclusion and gave an intuitive proof for it. He planned to give the detailed proof in subsequent work, but this was in fact carried out by others. It is easy to appreciate the significance of the theorem for Hilbert's programme. Hilbert had intended to vindicate mathematics by using arithmetical reasoning to demonstrate the consistency of formal systems adequate for the various branches of the subject. If such a demonstration had been possible, then we ought to have been able to represent it in a formal system of arithmetic. But by the second incompleteness theorem we know that it is impossible to do this if the discipline whose consistency we want to assess suffices for arithmetic. Moreover, the first incompleteness theorem already casts doubt on the ability of first-order formal systems to provide adequate representations of parts of informal mathematics.

The mathematical significance of Gödel's results became apparent during the 1930s. The studies of Alfred Tarski, Alonzo Church, Stephen Kleene, Emil Post and Alan Turing, together with further work by Gödel, developed the fundamental insights of the incompleteness theorems and began the theory of recursive ("computable") functions, obtaining major conclusions about computability and decidability. Logic became a fruitful part of mathematics, and its affiliations with the tradi-

tional mathematical disciplines and problems were profitably explored.

Despite the fact that Gödel's fame rests on work that he completed in his early twenties, it would be wrong to think of his remaining forty-seven years as an anti-climax. Important work on the foundations of set theory was to come in the 1930s and the 1940s (since none of his work was published before 1940, it is not included in the present volume). Later, Gödel turned his attention to the philosophical issues that had already intrigued him, and the quality of his few publications on these subjects must whet the appetite of any philosopher who learns that subsequent volumes of the *Collected Works* will print many of the manuscripts in the *Nachlass*. But, besides the major papers on incompleteness, this first volume contains smaller gems. Gödel's explorations of the connections between classical and "intuitionist" arithmetic and logic are included. Here are his investigations of decision problems in first-order logic.

The edition of Gödel's papers is a marvel of selfless scholarly teamwork. Under the leadership of Solomon Feferman, many of the world's most eminent logicians and historians of logic have pooled their talents to produce lucid and informative introductions, helpful notes and clear facing-page translations. It is no small tribute to Gödel to recognize that he deserves this co-ordination of patient work by brilliant scholars. Equally, it is no small tribute to those who have worked on this volume to say that their efforts are worthy of the subject.

That approach himself is by construing the formulation, modification and development of theories in terms of models and analogies that resemble reality to various degrees. This offers a picture of the growth of science in keeping with its actual history, and captures science's mode of progress more realistically than is possible using strict dichotomies of truth and falsity.

Following Ian Hacking and others, Harre distinguishes between attempts by science to identify the kinds of things there are in nature, on the one hand, and to give true characterizations of those things on the other, and suggests that realism is better understood in terms of the former rather than the latter. He argues that it has been possible for scientists to develop practices for identifying and manipulating atoms and electrons, for example, while recognizing that they must constantly revise what they regard as adequate descriptions of them. Realism is characterized by its ability to make successful reference to the natural world by way of material or experimental practice. As Hacking puts it, we may not be able to see electrons, but we can spray them.

One of the more innovative aspects of Harre's realism is his attempt to accommodate the results of contemporary sociology of science. Sociologists have noted that to defend their scientific practice scientists use a logicist or empiricist way of talking that does not reflect its realities. For instance, they frequently refer to their own data as true, proven and objective, in contrast with those of their rivals, which they describe as false, hypothetical or prejudiced. Harre's interesting suggestion, which is not developed in much detail, is that this rhetoric is best understood as a reflection of the moral order of science, which involves recognizing that there is an independent reality, that it is the aim of science to comprehend it, and that scientists should co-operate in this endeavour. In short, the morality appropriate for science is the adoption of scientific realism. From Harre's perspective, many of the problems traditional philosophers raise stem from their attempt to give a literal interpretation of concepts like truth and falsity, whereas these are more appropriately interpreted as rhetorical devices.

There is much that is provocative and controversial in *Varieties of Realism*, but it induces a form of scientific realism that promises to do justice to the actual history and practice of science while avoiding the sterile, and basically absurd, logic-chopping of traditional philosophy.

## In Memory of my Parents

Hieroglyphics, punctuation marks,  
Between now and one week ago  
When the snow fell, a bird landed  
Where they lie, and made cosier  
And whiter the white patchwork  
Then took off where I imagine  
Her ashes settling through soil  
On to his collarbone, shoulder,  
The tracks vanishing between wing  
Tips symmetrically printed.

MICHAEL LONGLEY

# Fuelling and feuding

Robert Waller

WILLIAM ASHWORTH  
*The History of the British Coal Industry*  
Volume Five: 1946-1982, The Nationalized Industry  
710pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £48.  
0 19 528295 8

It would seem at first sight that William Ashworth has been awarded a grim and gloomy task in chronicling the history of the nationalized British coal industry. The years from 1946 to 1982 were in many ways marked by failure and decline. At the time of nationalization, there were 958 working collieries; by 1982-3 only 191. Coal output fell from its peak of 228.4 million tonnes in 1952 to 121 million tonnes at the end of the period. The number of miners employed dropped from 704,000 in 1947 to 207,600. What is more, although Professor Ashworth has decided to terminate his story in 1982, at the end of an era of relative harmony, the confrontation of 1984-5 surely looms over the book.

So, must we record a condemnatory verdict on the policy of nationalization, which had been nurtured in the days of optimism and idealism in the mid-1940s? Ashworth himself points out that by 1980 there was a fashionable point of view which held that all State control was inefficient and even immoral. Certainly, it can scarcely be claimed that nationalization has brought either genuine public control or workers' control of the industry. The Coal Board got off to an unfortunate start with the

## Monetary memoirs

Alan Walters

WILLIAM BRETT and ROGER W. SPENCER  
(Editors)  
*Lives of the Laureates: Seven Nobel Economists*  
135pp. MIT. £10.95.  
0 262 02255 9

When seven American Nobel economics laureates accepted invitations to give lectures at Trinity University (San Antonio, Texas) on their intellectual evolution, the autobiographical sketches that emerged were thought to be worth publishing in this slim volume. The editors clearly believed that the lives of the economists would shed light on the process by which new ideas are conceived, developed and brought to fruition.

Alas, their hopes have not been realized. Two of the essays, those by Sir Arthur Lewis and Laurence Klein, read like extended versions of *Who's Who* entries - informative but not very enlightening. Both development economics, which is Lewis's field, and macroeconomic modelling, Klein's speciality, have proved to be disappointingly short of ideas that have survived critical scrutiny; experience and comparison with the data, and one would have thought that a critical assessment of these two areas of economics might have suited the format and purpose of the lecture series.

Kenneth Arrow, who shared a Nobel Prize with Sir John Hicks, outlines his main contributions to economic thought: the paradox of voting and social choice, the proof of a general equilibrium solution for a competitive system, and his work on insurance and risk. The mood of the lecture reflects Arrow's modesty. He attributes much, indeed too much, to his predecessors and to contemporaries who explored ideas similar to those which he himself is justly famed for developing. But we learn little of those flashes of insight and simplification that are the stuff of his creative thought.

James Tobin - the most distinguished Keynesian alive today - gives an account, both balanced and informative, of his life's work. His great contributions have been the consequence of his attempts to explain or rationalize features - often puzzling features - of real economies. The failure of unemployment and recession to have the dire consequences confidently predicted by Keynesians in the years after the Second World War led Tobin considerably to revise the idea of the consumption function. Similarly, Tobin was the leading

crises of supply which resulted in power cuts in the exceptionally cold winter of 1947, and its service to the consumer has hardly been untroubled since. Nor were the problems of industrial relations which had so dogged the industry solved. Although there was no national strike before 1972, there were numerous localized stoppages, and the record was irretrievably blotted by the great battles of 1972 (when Arthur Scargill first came to the fore with his philosophy of industrial and class warfare), 1974 (when the nation was asked in a General Election whether it was to be governed by the miners' union or the Tory government) - and of course 1984-5. Then the conflict was characterized not so much as the struggle against the State envisaged by Scargill (and Mrs Thatcher), as by a civil war between working and striking miners.

Ashworth does his best to approach his assignment even-handedly. The tale is not all negative. For the first ten years of nationalization output increased and only a few small work-out pits were closed. Even after the drastic pruning of the 1960s there were outbursts of optimism; hopes for a new stability around 1970 and those provided by the "cautious and rational" *Plan for Coal* of 1974. Output per man-year rose from 267 tonnes in 1947 to 504 tonnes in 1982-3, and output per man-shift from about three tonnes to about ten tonnes. Coal miners' average weekly wages rose from £6.65 to £166.07 in the same period, well in advance of inflation. And fatal accidents were, thankfully, much reduced from the shocking levels that still pertained in the 1940s and 50s. Open-cast mining, though ugly, con-

tinued to grow more profitable. However, careful and fair though this history is, it contains both overt and implied criticisms. Government intervention in management was haphazard and lacking in any overall policy - Britain has lacked a consistent and thoughtful plan for the supply of energy. The drive for coal output between 1947 and 1957 was excessive, and so were the cutbacks in the following, "middle", period up to 1973. Too few mines were closed, then too many. Too little faith was placed in oil and other alternative fuels, then too much. The days of co-operation between the NCB and NUM, when hard-headed and conciliatory union leaders like Will Lawther and Sam Watson of Durham faced board members brought up in the industry, were succeeded by the confrontations of the 1970s and 80s. The miners of the only two consistently profitable areas, South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, are now at each other's throats. Ashworth ends his final chapter of "reflections and explanations" by saying that a large question-mark must hang over the future of the industry - which is surely true.

Although in some senses an "official" history of the Coal Board, this worthy book is in no way biased towards the management's point of view (if indeed any such steady point of view can be identified). The technical passages as well as the narrative are written in an attractively clear and readable style. But although there are brief sections on housing, welfare and health, this is not a social history of coal mining communities, and it makes no attempt to capture the colour and passion - or even the drudgery and routine - of miners' lives.

It is doubtful whether any economist has ever been blackballed by the Swedish Academy for committing even the most egregious errors of simple analysis. For example, Gunnar Myrdal promoted the specious nonsense of the "vicious circle of poverty" theory, which argued that poor societies will always be poor unless they receive suitably large amounts of aid. Yet despite all evidence to the contrary, he received the prize.

In view of all this, one is tempted to agree with Friedman that Nobel Prizes, at least in economics, are a mistake and should be abolished, and the money spent on more worthy causes. But this may be to misunderstand the nature of economic thought. George Stigler, sometime Professor at the University of Chicago, and perhaps the greatest living historian of economic thought, took the opportunity of his lecture to give not only his own biography but also his reflections on the process of creativity and originality in economics. Creativity proceeds either from the critical examination of the ideas of other economists, or from attempts to explain some body of empirical phenomena. But there will always be an interest in locating, and moralizing on, the springs of creativity, even if such pursuits will always be conjectural and unsettling.

Of course one would have expected the defenders of the professional conscience to have cried foul, and this does happen. But all too often caution and circumspection prevent any outright denunciation of politicians. One prominent example of such neglect of fundamental principles of economics was the debate over the dollar shortage of the 1950s. Almost all prominent economists declared that a dollar shortage was in the nature of things and would continue for as long as could be foreseen. Sir John Hicks, for example, devoted his inaugural lecture at Oxford to the argument that it would always be with us. Friedman was one of the few to attack the assumption. He pointed out that the supply of dollars and their price depended on fiscal and monetary policy; and he was right. By the end of the 1950s, the shortage had turned into a glut. Yet the economists who, by neglecting fundamental positions of supply and demand, had promoted the idea of a permanent shortage appeared to suffer no loss of esteem or revision of their reputa-

# Banishing illusions

Christopher Johnson

ALEC CAIRCROSS  
*Economics and Economic Policy*  
230pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £22.50.  
0 631 15233 4

Sir Alec Cairncross is a good example of how successful an economist can be if he avoids encumbering himself with ideology, and applies his skill to practical issues of policy. As Head of the Government Economic Service from 1964 to 1969 he helped to strip the politicians of those days of some of their illusions, and governments since then might have done better to take his sensible advice offered from retirement than to listen to the ideological sagas of our time.

*Economics and Economic Policy* consists of lectures and essays, spanning the last ten years, and are an antidote to the extremes of monetarism and socialism alike. In the keynote contribution, "Economics in Theory and Practice", Sir Alec comments that "theory can be an organized way of going wrong with confidence", although he shows how theory can also be valuable if applied in the right way. Even more apposite is his comment in "Academics and Policy Makers" that "there is a strong tendency toward oversimplification of the issues and their resolution in ideological terms. The public, the government and, from time to time, economists too grasp at fashionable nostrums and give direction to policy by espousing one myth after another".

The lecture "The Market and the State" - part of the Adam Smith 1976 bicentenary conference at Glasgow University, of which Sir Alec is now Chancellor - steers a judicious course between the rival ideologies, in a manner that does more justice to Smith than some of the more *laissez-faire* interpretations. The objectives that the market may not serve turn out to be all the major aims of economic policy: equality, full employment, avoidance of inflation, external balance and economic growth. Cairncross lists the failings of the market, and equally the failings of the State.

Among the topics covered in the ten remaining essays are planning, technological progress, and monetary, fiscal and exchange-rate policy. Cairncross shows in "Keynes and the Planned Economy" that Keynes was no more a "Keynesian" than he was a monetarist. Like Keynes himself, the author shuns the more ambitious claims of economic theory. His objective has always been as much the avoidance of error as the revelation of truth. He sums it up well in this quotation from Lionel Robbins: "The most useful economic principles... seem often mere banalities, almost an anti-climax after the formidable controversies amid which they have emerged. Yet experience seems to show that, without systematic training in the application of such platitudes, the most acute minds are liable to go astray."

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## From the old masters

Colin Russ

RAYMOND KEENE and DAVID GOODMAN  
The Centenary Match: Kasparov-Karpov III  
124pp. Batsford. £5.95.

BOB WADE and others  
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Unnumbered pages. Chequers, 18 Chalk Farm  
Road, London NW1. £14.50 (paperback,  
£9.95).

187020 705 X  
GARY KASPAROV  
Kasparov Teaches Chess  
124pp. Batsford. £5.95.

HOWARD STAUNTON  
The Chess Tournament: London 1851  
377pp. Batsford. £14.95.

07134 50592

A hundred years after Wilhelm Steinitz became the first World Chess Champion in 1886, Gary Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov engaged in their third consecutive match for the title. Their arrival in London for its first half inspired media "chess hype" of an intensity unparalleled since Bobby Fischer took the title in 1972. Stereotypes flourished: the charismatic Kasparov, patron of ballorinas, was meeting the aloof, stamp-collecting Karpov whom he had dethroned the previous year and who, worse still, had allegedly run into difficulties with the Soviet equivalent of HM Inspector of Taxes. Extras included the President of the World Chess Federation, whose threat to confiscate a sponsor's nameboard in the playing arena led to its being protectively nailed down.

In fact, the true excitement was elsewhere, on the chessboard. They are excellently documented in *The Centenary Match* and in *The Book of the World Championship*, both of which give all twenty-four games of the match. Keene and Goodman's is an "instant book", produced after the contest ended in Leningrad with Kasparov's victory. Analysis of the games is thus necessarily economical, particularly towards the end. On the other hand, there is extensive background material, including the history of the Championship, and a cliff-hanging account of how the two Ks were brought to London - would funding sanctioned by the GLC? The Chequers book, enterprisingly published from the London chess café of that name, is the work of an expert team. It offers extensive and valuable technical analysis. Visual "replays" of the games, with a diagram after each pair of moves, are a helpful and original feature. The book is further enlivened

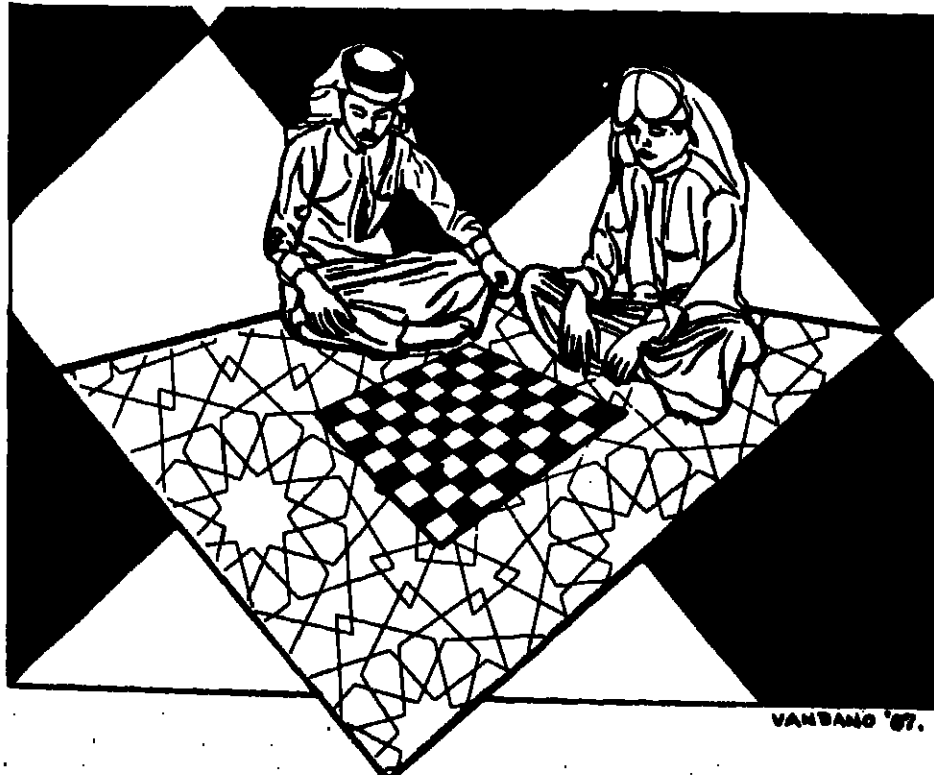
by photographs and drawings, and for good measure it gives the fourteen games of the Sokolov-Yusupov match from a new cycle of World Championship eliminators.

The literature of chess has been permanently enriched by certain games of what was possibly the best final in the history of the Championship. Both players emerged with great honour, inspiring in their London audiences admiration and delight. Ultimately, the deepest impression rekindled by these books is of the brilliance of some of Kasparov's victories. Although he acknowledges his debt to one predecessor (Alekhine) and has certain affinities with another (Tal), his play appears sometimes to extend the very frontiers of chess. Grandmaster Suetin has recently suggested that its comprehension requires a methodology as yet undiscovered. The analyses in these two attractive books offer source material for the search.

*Kasparov Teaches Chess* reproduces twenty-four "lessons" from the magazine *Sport in the USSR*. Admittedly, it did not require a World Champion to write them, but they are welcome for their common-sense guidance, designed for the average club player. Moreover, the cachet of Kasparov's name will attract younger readers, to their benefit. The book explores major aspects of chess, including some that deserve more attention than they have conventionally

received in general guides (counter-attack, for example, or chess compositions). The image of Kasparov as the intuitive, aggressive iconoclast is here corrected by his respect for the lessons to be learned from the old masters, by his emphasis on cultivating positional judgment, and by his tribute to the "phenomenal master of defence", Petrosian. Above all, the influence of his mentor, Mikhail Botvinnik, emerges in Kasparov's view of private research as an avenue to chess success. Even for the amateur, the royal game is clearly becoming ever more demanding, and rewarding.

*The Chess Tournament: London 1851* appears in Batsford Chess Classics, a new and most welcome facsimile series. As in 1886, London found itself in 1851 the "capital" of chess. Intended to coincide with the Great Exhibition, the tournament of that year was the first international event of its kind. Howard Staunton, Shakespearean scholar and until a few years previously the strongest player in the world, was its moving spirit. In his book, both the tournament games and his notes to them are agreeably Victorian in style ("Again Mr Wyvill loses precious time. Of what avail was the advance of this flank Pawn just now?"). The long introduction, in which Staunton's notorious crustiness is given full rein, shows that off-the-board controversy is not the invention of his latter-day admirer, Fischer.



A detail from one of Van Dano's illustrations to *The Game of the Round: Dubai Olympiad 1986* by Bob Wade and others (unnumbered pages. Chequers, 18 Chalk Farm Road, London NW1. £14.50 (paperback, £9.95). 1870202 137).

## Pried after a fall

Dervla Murphy

TOM HOLZEL and AUDREY SALKELD  
The Mystery of Mallory and Irvine  
322pp. Cape. £12.50.

0224 023624

Tom Holzel is an American who suffers from a compulsion to establish what actually happened on June 8, 1924, just below the summit of Everest. "An enthusiastic recreational mountaineer", he runs a computer engineering company and has invented and patented a new type of "rebreathing" apparatus for prolonged high-altitude use. In 1970 he first heard of Mallory and Irvine and at once became obsessed by the contentious mystery of their deaths. Soon he developed a theory of his own, first published in *Mountain* magazine in 1971 and based on "the main new information... the effect of oxygen use on climbing speed". That article provoked a blizzard of controversy and he now admits that it contained "a number of errors". Undeterred, he continued his study of the "conflicting arguments about what might have happened" and - as is often the case when obsessives are allowed to take up too much time - his judgment began to warp. He finds it "extraordinary" that Mallory's biographer (and son-in-law), David Robertson, "could not bring himself to say that his subject had died". This is an absurd remark, Professor Robertson

ends his Everest 1924 chapter with Odell's famous description of two black spots moving up the snow and - "Then the whole fascinating vision vanished...". It was scarcely necessary to spell it out. In fact the Robertson conclusion worked well artistically, yet from it - and a few other equally implausible clues - Mr Holzel deduced "a conspiracy of silence".

In 1975 Holzel attempted to organize an expedition to follow Mallory's route and look for missing cameras; the frozen film, "properly developed, might still yield its latent images". When the necessary permits were refused he began to correspond with Audrey Salkeld, a distinguished English expert on mountaineering, and "together we decided to become historical detectives". In 1979, he wrote to a Japanese expedition asking them to "be on the look-out for Irvine's body, which I had predicted would be found on a snow terrace at about 27,000 feet". A few months later he received a letter from the Japanese Alpine Club reporting that on October 11, 1979, a non-English-speaking Chinese climber, Wang Kow Po, had told the Japanese Climbing Leader that in 1974, at 26,575 feet, he had seen a corpse which he described as "English". When he touched its clothes they disintegrated and were blown away; he then covered the body with snow. On the day after his belated revelation, Wang himself was killed in an avalanche. Holzel at once decided that Irvine's body had been found, precisely where he had predicted

it would be found. But might not the body have been Mallory's? Or even a Chinese or Russian corpse? As the unfortunate Wang did not survive to provide fuller details, the reader might be less convinced than Holzel, who regards Wang's "astonishing report" as "the first new evidence about the Mallory and Irvine attempt since the discovery of their ice-axe in 1933".

This is a clumsily constructed book, possibly because its authors were unused to working as a team. Oddly dispersed chapters give a potted biography of Mallory and there is yet another detailed account of the 1920s Everest Expeditions with much emphasis on the Great Oxygen Debate - which the "unmasked" conquest of Everest, on May 8, 1978, has rendered medically if not ethically obsolete. In his final chapter Holzel wallows in speculation of the most pointless sort. We have Mallory and Irvine splitting up at 1pm, after which "Mallory quickly raced up the final pyramid of Everest's summit. Irvine... started his descending traverse... Perhaps after numerous small slips; each caught in time, Irvine lost control as both his feet shot out from under him". Here some readers may be tempted to speculate themselves and wonder how Mallory would have viewed Mr Holzel's obsession. As Ronald Clark noted in *Men, Myths and Mountains*: "Mallory saw mountaineering as nothing more serious than a sport and nothing less serious than a sport with mystical and philosophical overtones."

## Academy of soccer?

Paul Smith

CHARLES KORR

West Ham United: The making of a football club  
257pp. Duckworth. £14.95 (paperback, £7.95).

07156 21262

Football fans with a still unspent Christmas book token and a sense of the game's past need look no further. Charles Korr, an American, has produced both an intimate account of West Ham United since its origins in the Thames Ironworks FC of 1895 and a study of the football club as a part of social history which ought to be the forerunner of many more.

West Ham, Korr writes, has been shaped "by the area in which it developed; by the attitudes of its working-class residents and the sense of proper conduct that permeated the local business class". The latter influence is the easier to document, because it was the local business class that ran the club through a small, self-perpetuating oligarchy of virtually lifetime directors, while the working classes functioned as employees or spectators; the former kept firmly under control, the latter, one feels, tolerated as much as welcomed. (The directors responded frostily to the formation of a supporters' club in 1947: they simply saw no need for it.) In giving Korr access to its records, a particular the board minutes on which much of his account relies, the club set a fine example of co-operation, but it also did something to determine his angle of vision. This is in large part the view from the boardroom, and the most satisfying chapters are those that show how the club was directed by men with precise notions of labour relations and a considerable sense of corporate privacy which Korr is not always hard enough into the tangle to penetrate. The departure of the manager Ted Fenton in 1961, for example, remains a mystery.

From the 1950s things changed at the Boleyn Ground, as players like Malcolm Allison became less willing to behave as indentured servants and League and Cup successes forced the club to shed some of its reticence; this led, in Korr's view, to a tacit agreement to create a suitable public relations mythology, stressing West Ham's character as a "family" club deeply rooted in the local community, its dedication to the ideals of cultured football represented by the notion of the West Ham "academy of soccer". Korr is properly sceptical of this image. It is doubtful that the club relied as much as is often alleged on local talent, or that preference for home-grown players was crucial to local support. The supposed valuing of good play and good sportsmanship over good results has to be weighed against Dick Walker's comment on his years at centre half: "I couldn't play, but I could stop those that would. West Ham was a hard club."

The nature of the relationship between club and community is difficult to gauge and Korr does not go much deeper than the observation that "Football at all levels was an antidote to the realities of daily life." West Ham may well have been an agency of communal coping with poverty and drabness, but it was only one among several, and football clubs need to be set firmly in the frame of the whole entertainment industry of which they were often the draughtiest and most uncomfortable part. More attention might have been given to the consumers: there is no effort to look at the class and sex composition of crowds, the fluctuations of popularity between football and other attractions, the relation of gates to the level of local employment or of success on the field to productivity in local industry. Nor is there much exploration of what it meant to go to the match. More oral history would have helped here. So would some analysis of programmes, whose language, visual style and advertisements go far to recreate the tissue of experiences, values and assumptions which bound the stands and the terraces. None the less, Charles Korr has gone far to rescue club history from libred anecdote, and his example will encourage others to take the integration of sporting into social history further.

## A gulf unbridged

Roger Whitney

CHARLES BLACKMORE  
In the Footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia  
176pp. Harrap. £9.95.

0245 54186

In February 1985, Captain Charles Blackmore of the Royal Green Jackets, together with a fellow officer, a Bandsman and a Rifleman from the Regiment, set off to follow the routes travelled by T. E. Lawrence within Jordan during the Arab Revolt. In *The Footsteps of Lawrence of Arabia* describes their daily progress - south-east from Wadi Rumm to Mudawwarah, the scene of one of Lawrence's most lengthily described train-wrecking expeditions, then north to El Jafr, Bayir and Azraq before turning south to Rumm again via El Qatran, Tafil, Petra and Aba El Lasan. They hired their camels from the local Howaitat for £1,000 each, and paid a Howaitat, Mohammed Misa,

to guide them. In the event, he brought two others with him - one of whom was sacked after a week.

"You know, the Bedouin do not do these journeys any more. Our country is changed and only a few remain in the desert. I think perhaps you have come fifty years too late." The Jordanian Army Brigadier was right; and this book will disappoint anyone hoping for some authoritative answers to the questions raised by Lawrence's own story of his journeys and military actions. The Brigadier's belief that they would find the trail cold proved well founded: at Mudawwarah they found the people either ignorant of, or uninterested in, the train Lawrence wrecked, though its remains lie only fifteen miles away. More importantly, the expedition seems to have been singularly unqualified to test Lawrence's claims. By Blackmore's own cheerful admission they were astonishingly, if bravely, ill-equipped to make the most of their journey, being almost entirely ignorant of camels, the bedouin, the desert,

and, greatest handicap of all, of Arabic. Expectations of military efficiency are soon shattered: up to a few days before starting from Rumm they had no detailed maps.

Blackmore claims that it was not their intention to check the truth of Lawrence's account. Yet this was clearly a reasonable thing to attempt, and once or twice he has a stab at it. He doubts, for instance, Lawrence's claim to have travelled from Bayir to El Jafr (fifty-five miles) in less than twelve hours, much of it at night. Blackmore's expedition took twenty hours to cover the same ground, and in daylight. But no sensible comparison can be made between the possible achievements of an experienced obsessive on a fit camel with a single companion and the findings of a laden expedition of four neophytes and two recalcitrant guides mounted on animals which in all probability had never gone more than a few leisurely miles in a day.

At Tafila (the site of the action for which Lawrence, on the evidence of his own dispatches, was awarded the DSO) the author says only that he found "difficulty in relating [Lawrence's] account to the ground". Another expedition member, in a letter to *The Times*, mentioned talking with local people, whose descriptions of the battle were at variance with Lawrence's. Sadly, the book says nothing about such investigations, which might have added something to those of Suleiman Mousa in *T. E. Lawrence: An Arab view* (1966).

Not surprisingly, the expedition found what others have found: that Lawrence is, if remembered at all, overshadowed in local memory by Arab leaders such as Auda Abu Tayi, and, as a foreigner, by Glubb. They also found (as did Lawrence) that the main problem in travelling with the bedouin is the strain of coping with people whose modes of thought and action appear so alien. Despite the guarded and limited rapport which they managed to build with their Howaitat companions, they remained acutely aware of the fragility of the relationship, and were frequently bemused by

ning of October, so that his actual time spent in India was no longer than two years and six months. This brief period takes up half of Hughes's book, and indeed it is only after Heber reaches the East that the story really comes to life, which it does through generous quotations from the bishop's travel diaries. He spent the greater part of his short episcopacy in lengthy and often hazardous tours, travelling from Calcutta to Bombay and then Ceylon, by way of Lucknow, Meerut, Delhi (where he met the Mogul emperor), Jaipur and Baroda. Heber was an acute and shrewd observer. He criticized the way the British contrived to be "a caste by themselves", which he was convinced did much harm, and he was punctilious himself in inviting Indians to his receptions; he deplored the way they were excluded from senior posts in the East India Company. Unlike his predecessor, he made a point of ordaining Indians to the priesthood. The diaries take us as near as we get in this book to understanding the nature of the man himself. The figure that emerges is an attractive but slightly withdrawn and daunting personality.

At the time of his death Heber was on another gruelling tour, this time to the south. One of his purposes was to try to bring peace to the ancient Syrian Church in Malabar, where schism threatened. In commenting on this and on his easy relations with Muslims and Hindus, Hughes suggests that the modern Church of South India, with its consortium of denominations, would have "astonished Heber, but would not have dismayed him". This I venture to doubt. Heber was concerned in his mediation with the Malabar Christians that they should not endanger their apostolic succession, and he had no sympathy for the "enthusiasm" evinced by contemporary Methodists. Of John Wesley's conversion in 1739 when already a Christian minister, Heber commented scornfully, "From what was he converted?" He was not a man for whom ecumenism could be all-embracing if it threatened to weaken what he regarded as essential dogma. There seems, however, to be little doubt, as this book shows, that the Church lost a potentially great bishop by his early death; its very suddenness, with so much of his work unfulfilled, leaves us with the impression of an unfinished portrait.

## Following the Saints

From the rock of my heart a horse rose,  
that I should ride to follow them,  
the night they left by taxi  
from the Damascus gate, and fled toward Bombay.  
My heart threw me off,  
if only I had robes white enough,  
but my robes were full of ashes and dust.  
The rouge, lipstick, the eyeshadows  
you left on my flesh, I washed off before prayer.  
My heart looked back at me from a distance,  
its reins bitten through - and was gone.

STANLEY MOSS

## THE TIMES



## Women write on

Next Thursday's Books Page includes Peter Ackroyd on Marianne Moore's prose and a review of a new novel by Fay Weldon (above)



... and regularly in *The Times*,  
Bernard Levin (left) on the way we live now,  
Kenneth Fleet on finance,  
Irving Wardle on the theatre, Frances Gibb on  
the law, Paul Griffiths on music,  
Shona Crawford Poole on travel,  
Clifford Longley on the Church,  
Philip Howard on words, David Robinson on  
the cinema... and much more each week

THE TIMES

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# Hitler youths

## Lesley Chamberlain

KAREN GERSON  
The Fifth Generation  
160pp. Gollancz. £9.95.  
0575039256  
WESSEL EBERSOHN  
Klara's Visitors  
278pp. Gollancz. £10.95.  
0575039469

In *The Fifth Generation*, Peter Sanger, child survivor or "offcut" of the Nazi death camps, fostered by another German Jewish survivor and her Welsh social worker husband, grows up believing he is a Jew, until a letter from Germany tells him he is Aryan and calls him to London. There, bristling with adolescent resentment, the sixteen-year-old putative orphan from a hard-up, emotionally pinched family meets a new generation of Nazis in the form of mythical men and an alluring woman, to whom he would instantly give his troublesome virginity. They tell him he is Hitler's illegitimate son.

Peter has a shaming tattoo on his buttocks which is the only clue to his real identity. The fierceness of his changing responses to his unexplored past suggests that Karen Gerson's narrative emanates mainly from his fantasy. How better to get his revenge against an adoptive Jewish mother, swamping him with affection, than to imagine being told that his real mother was a blonde Nazi sharpshooter with an Akkatian? As his estranged life on a Taunton housing estate gradually lessens its hold, he travels in *Klara's Visitors* sometimes seems first cousin. The devilish liveliness is hard to sustain throughout 278 pages in which only National Socialism progresses, but the mockery whines on, painful and accurate.

("What do you say, my Corporal? Do you have the balls for such a task? I have the ball, my General!") Hitler's inner logic is a life-time's exercise in escaping humiliation, and so thoroughly does he do his work that he feels nothing but his success. From his repeated failure to answer the call in the brothel, leaving the girls either laughing or crying, he can assuredly deduce the inferiority of women. He passes from eating roast cat to becoming a vegetarian, believing that the gentle flavour of vegetables will, by never masking poison, protect him from the fate threatening all great men.

This short psychological tale blends nurture, history and the strengths and foibles of Jewishness with teenage complexes. Peter discovers both sex and the Holocaust by getting away from his mother. She had banned books on the Jewish extermination, forcing him to treat that subject too as something dirty. He had to rebel. "Ever heard of Santayana?" says one of the healing characters to Peter. "He said that those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it..." Karen Gerson's writing is plain, despite the sprinkling of German, Yiddish and schoolboy slang, and so unreluctantly unsensational that one's attention is inclined to wander. *The Fifth Generation* may be true enough as a claustrophobic study in resentment and its fantasies, but it doesn't open out enough to become a novel.

By contrast Wessel Ebersohn's fourth novel

squarely earns the title by placing another fantasist, Adolf Hitler, on the couch. His crazy inward flights are recorded in a private journal, and Freud ("Only his race prevents him from achieving true status") is finally called in after pursuing the secretive Führer from childhood. Far from siring random children, Hitler with his Hochstetter but only one peanut is virtually impotent, except when his superiority complex delivers him. Even then he has to put down his hand-mirror, unlock his door and search his destiny as a healthy Superman for an excuse to ejaculate. The journal comes to us via an excellent prostitute who had to put up with his failures, and it shows how the shy Corporal who refused to shower with other men rationalized his impotence by calling it purity and will-power.

The daemonic quality of the man is most apparent in the child's rage and the teenager's stiffness. In adolescence the destructive inner voice swells instead of the organ. Finally the mature man rapes Germany with his oratory and slinks back to his room, "empty and weak, a masturbator at the greatest orgy in history". Recovering his strength he is mindlessly destructive. Failing to board his sexy niece, he kills his rivals in the name of her totemic purity and destroys her without being capable of registering the deed as his own. You wanted to destroy all men, says the cigar-smoking Jewish doctor, but in particular your father who defiled your pure and lovely mother: "Stop speaking and your influence will immediately start to shrink."

This novel is full of the kind of memorably clever anti-Nazi energy one finds in Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum*, to whose Oskar the young Hitler in *Klara's Visitors* sometimes seems first cousin. The devilish liveliness is hard to sustain throughout 278 pages in which only National Socialism progresses, but the mockery whines on, painful and accurate. ("What do you say, my Corporal? Do you have the balls for such a task? I have the ball, my General!") Hitler's inner logic is a life-time's exercise in escaping humiliation, and so thoroughly does he do his work that he feels nothing but his success. From his repeated failure to answer the call in the brothel, leaving the girls either laughing or crying, he can assuredly deduce the inferiority of women. He passes from eating roast cat to becoming a vegetarian, believing that the gentle flavour of vegetables will, by never masking poison, protect him from the fate threatening all great men.

Ebersohn's three previous novels were set in South Africa. Like them, this intimate history of one man's deluded dictatorship also cooks a smook at his native country.

# Waiting for Goddi

## Mark Casserley

JEREMY COOPER  
Ruth  
187pp. Hutchinson. £9.95.  
009 1671108

Ruth got up. Walking down the dingy path towards the door she stopped abruptly, put down the pot of mallow, and took off her knickers, wet through from sitting on the damp steps. She rubbed her bottom, drying herself with her skirt, and continued down the path, knickers abandoned at one side.

An episode from childhood, perhaps? Ruth is thirty, however, and an artist; the snails are for a still-life. She has been in and out of mental hospital ever since her first breakdown in her teens, and now lives with her widowed mother in a village near Olstonbury. Together, the two women walk a bio-chemical tightrope. The reader is kept close to Ruth for most of the book, and the narrative has the effect of conveying directly her tone of voice. The result is saturation in her claustrophobic mental and spiritual world, as she tries to make sense of her life, to deal with memories of her adored father and her own childhood, or wanders alone in the surrounding countryside. The completion of her big painting, "My Kingdom Come", which embodies many of her personal and religious feelings, coincides with a determination to become independent, and, for the first time, to leave the house.

Jeremy Cooper's achievement in *Ruth*, his first novel, is to make Ruth's predicament poignant and absorbing, rather than boring or disgusting; in the quotation above, or the scene in which Ruth masturbates, one does not feel that the reader is being made a voyeur. Cooper blends intimacy with a clinical fastidiousness, and he also provides an external viewpoint. Gray, an old family friend, who has escaped from this compelling milieu to Canada, sends tapes to his own psychiatrist when they are apart; he has a cynical view of Ruth's family, is drawn to her, but realizes that her case is hopeless; through him, Ruth's descent into violence is chronicled - she turns first on the family possessions, then on herself, and finally on her mother. At that crisis, the narrative returns to her side; the rhythm of relapse and recovery continues, until Ruth's determination turns to acceptance of the will of her God (or "Goddi": the pet-name is another fine touch), and she engineers a return home from hospital, where she enjoys a brief sexual initiation at the hands of a visiting archaeologist she has befriended. The novel ends with Ruth's calm decision in favour of suicide ("I'm coming, Goddi, I'm coming"), the event itself reported from Gray's point of view.

Cooper excels in the management of tone and of narrative viewpoint. *Ruth* seems emotionally honest, because not manipulative, and yet is adroit enough to avoid monotony. The only remaining question is: will there be more?

# Medicine woman

## Greer Phillips

GILLIAN BRADSHAW  
The Beacon at Alexandria  
376pp. Methuen. £10.95.  
0413 408906

The narrator of Gillian Bradshaw's new novel, an Ephesian noblewoman named Charis, is an unwilling participant in the great Visigothic revolt of 376-8 AD, the first in the series of barbarian invasions that eventually destroyed half of the Roman Empire. Bred in Ephesus to the studied blankness demanded of a woman of her class, Charis none the less reads Hippocrates and Galen and, when she reaches marriageable age, refuses to wed the brutal aristocrat that her father chooses for her. In the guise of a eunuch, she flees to Alexandria and studies at the venerable medical school there. By various unlikely turns, and keeping her eunuch's disguise, she becomes physician to the archbishop of Alexandria, the redoubtable Athanasius, an ascetic, ferocious sectarian, and lifelong champion of the (then) radical Nicene creed. Forced to leave Alexandria after the death of Athanasius, Charis becomes an army doctor in Thrace and gains so much renown that the Visigoths kidnap her for her medical expertise.

# Criminal proceedings

## T. J. Binyon

JONATHAN KELLERMAN  
Blood Test  
257pp. Macdonald. £9.95.  
0356 122409

Alex Delaware, the child psychologist hero-narrator from *Shrunk Heads*, Jonathan Kellerman's fine first novel, is called on by an oncological colleague for assistance: the Swopes, members of a bizarre Californian sect, are refusing to allow their young son to be treated for a curable cancer. Then they, the patient and his excessively nubile sister vanish and Alex takes up the trail, unravelling, in the process, a complex family history. Brilliant Californian background, with the action taking place against a frieze of fitness freaks, vitamin poppers, religious maniacs and ageing hash-heads. Alex's girlfriend is away, which means we are spared the sentimental canoodling of the previous book; in addition *Blood Test* has a much tighter plot than its predecessor. All in all, the mantle of Ross Macdonald is hovering not too far above Jonathan Kellerman's shoulders.

MATT JOHNSON  
Harjunpaa and the Stone Murders  
156pp. Gollancz. £8.95.  
0575036788

Harjunpaa is Detective Inspector Timo Harjunpaa of the Helsinki police. He gets the case when a body with a pile of stones on its stomach is found on the beach. Powerful, infinitely depressing study of teenage delinquency in Helsinki, impenetrably enveloped in insipid Scandinavian gloom.

CHARLOTTE MACLEOD  
The Corpse in Oozark's Pond  
197pp. Collins. £8.95.  
000 2320886

Another of Charlotte Macleod's light and amusing recitals of life at the Balclava Agricultural College in darkest New England, where most of the rural population sound like exiles from Eliot's *Waste Land*. A male corpse in an ancient eleventh-century coat has been discovered in Oozark's pond; he's obviously a descendant of Balclava Buggins, founder of the college, but is he Boatwright, Braconbridge, Bathbridge or Trowbridge Buggins? And who is behind the lawsuit that threatens to deprive the college of Oozark's pond? Peter Shaggy, professor of agronomy, as usual sorts things out. Coyness and complexities not always clear, but a family tree aids comprehension.

Charis talks in love (of course) with a handsome patient. Dare she reveal her secret to him when exposure as a woman would mean the end of her hard-won stature as a professional? We need not worry. Her beloved, a pliable Gothic prince, not only loves her (and rescues her from the Visigothic camp) but tells her that she can use her considerable dowry to open a private hospital.

Fortunately, the history is much more interesting than the story. The spare description of Charis's first meeting with Athanasius conveys the ever-present threat of religious not a frequently a killing matter. Bradshaw's portrait of the Gothic chieftain Frigiter illustrates the culturally ambiguous position of the barbarian elite: resident in a Roman villa and pleased to converse in flawless Greek, Frigiter supervises the scorched-earth plundering expeditions of the Visigothic war band. But best is the depiction of Hippocratic medicine as practised by Charis - reliant on preventive measures, the natural restorative power of the body, and, apparently, judicious use of opium. The densely textured historical detail of *The Beacon at Alexandria* overcomes its limp plot, and, on the whole, qualifies the book for a place on the short shelf of the thinking person's historical novels.

## DICK FRANCIS

Bolt  
Michael Joseph. £9.95.  
07181 27560

Champion steeplechase jockey Kit Fielding is now engaged to Danielle, whom he pursued relentlessly through the pages of *Break A Bolt*, Dick Francis's last novel. So when Roland Bescros, Danielle's crippled uncle, finds that he is having trouble with an unscrupulous business partner, who wants to use their French plastics business to make pistols, it's only natural that he should turn to Kit for assistance. Bolt preserves (just) Dick Francis's reputation for readability, but almost every other quality that adorned his other novels - tension, excitement, surprise, atmosphere and characterization - has vanished through the window. At one point in the story there is much talk about modern and old-fashioned humane killers: whatever the method, it would have been kinder to readers and author alike had this book been put down before it ever got as far as a proof.

JOHN LEAR  
Death in Leningrad  
183pp. Pluto. £8.95.  
07453 01355

School-teacher Ashweald, whose past intelligence is a long way behind him, is approached by a former colleague and offered £10,000 to attend a month's language course in Leningrad and keep an eye open for odd anomalies. As well as brushing up his Cyrillic, Ashweald meets an old friend, falls in love, and experiences a tragic loss. Russian atmosphere and Leningrad background are stippled in with a master's touch, but the intrigue remains as clear as the Admiralty viewed through a November mist from the other side of the Neva.

ELLIS PETERS  
The Rose Rent  
190pp. Macmillan. £8.95.  
0333 426827

It's the spring of 1142. Matilda is in Oxford. Stephen has taken Wareham. And in Shrewsbury, in the garden of Judith Perle's house in the Monk's Foregate, the abbey rich young widow has bestowed on the abbey in exchange for one white rose a year, the rose bush which is to provide this rent is in blossom. But the girl arouses jealousy: two murders and an abduction follow, providing Brother Caedfel with material for his thirteenth case. Another impenetrable and skilfully professional blend of history, romance and detection from Ellis Peters.

# Respect for the facts

## Anne Duchêne

ALICE MUNRO  
The Progress of Love  
309pp. Chatto and Windus. £9.95.  
0701131616

This is Alice Munro's fifth collection of stories in almost twenty years. Five of the eleven stories here first appeared in the *New Yorker*, one in the *Paris Review* - a far cry from her acknowledged, back in 1968, in *Dance of the Happy Shades*, to the *Tamarack Review*, *Montrealer* and *Canadian Forum*. Her one novel, *The Beggar Maid*, went so far as to be short-circuited in the Booker switch-on of 1980.

No newcomer, then; yet this accomplished writer - so serious, careful and full of sardonic good humour - remains curiously under-celebrated. The blurb here grows a bit hectic about how she "uncovers the unexpected where it crackles underneath" in the lives of "apparently ordinary folk" who in fact "pulse with idiosyncratic life", etc. The truth is that she has such a respect for fact, such a kind of loving humility before domestic, circumstantial detail, that even if one can't always imagine oneself in a Munro situation, one can easily imagine one's neighbour.

Quite a lot of the writer's temper is carried in the closing lines of the title story here:

It was just as well to make up right away. Moments of kindness and reconciliation are worth having, even if the parting has to come sooner or later. I wonder if those moments aren't more valued, and deliberately gone after, in the setup some people like myself have now, than they were in those old marriages, where love and grudges could be growing underground, so confused and stubborn, it must have seemed they had forever.

This ends a story that spins through concentric circles of the narrator's, her mother's and her grandmother's experience. It commands "the setup some people have now" and its nervous, evanescent growth; it indulges the author's fascination in digging over the matted roots of "love and grudges" from the past; and it oversteers the bleak bedrock of low expectations it steadfastly respects the ordinary humane norm - well, animal norm - which prefers and seeks "moments of kindness and reconciliation".

Typically, too, the inelegant energy of the rhythms matches the narrator - a middle-aged Canadian woman who has worked in a small-town estate agent's since leaving home, has borne two children, and divorced, and now looks lucidly on her modified "setup". This little semi-rural town, close to lakes and plains, is the same as the one the author used to call Jubilee - rather more suburban now, but still able to pick up allusions to Coldwater Baptists. The characters haven't changed, either: mothers and fathers of prime importance, siblings, cousins, aunts and the "best friends" of youth hard on their heels. Husbands and lovers are less reliable, somehow; sneakier, more evasive and self-indulgent. Not on ideological grounds, just from observation: it seems to be the way they are.

The stories themselves, almost all about the commoner pains or the milder divergences of loving, have a great impulsive impact wherever theme and image marry. "White Dump", for instance, brilliantly and bitterly yokes a grandmother, her son, his wives and his two children at the moment of conception, as it were, of a divorce, as well as years later. It has a smooth, baleful glitter, like ice, and anyone who read it last year in the *New Yorker* will find it reverberating in the memory. "Lichen", where an ageing woman recognizes her ex-husband's unredeemable immaturity, plays on the same contrast - warmth in nature, in voices, in hope, stricken by the chill and complexity of disappointment. "Circle of Prayer", where a single mother is reassured by a mental defective, allows the same cold sunshine at the end. More disturbingly, "Fits" is about the reactions of a preternaturally reserved wife to the killing of her neighbours.

The funeral sermon over these out-of-towners is pronounced, incidentally, by "the United Church minister, who usually took up the slack in the cases of no known affiliation". Humour is present everywhere, in this writing, as naturally as olives exude oil. When it is, exceptional, as in "Huskimo", a study of sensuality -

the deprivation is very acute.

All these are contemporary stories, told in cool tones, the characters chastened by forces, or accidents, we recognize. Sometimes, in what someone who hasn't been around for fifty years or so might call the "historical" stories, the author's passionate attachment to detail, and the need to cover a longer span in the same small space, can lead to elaboration rather than illumination; one longs to see the idea seized on the wing, as it were, with less information about plumage, habitat, nesting habits and the rest. "A Queer Streak", about the barminess in a rural family, has to be broken into two parts. It is fifty pages long; most stories here are twenty or thirty - twice as long, almost invariably, as those of 1968. "The Moon in the Orange Street Skating Rink" is a densely packed, baroque story about youth fifty years or so ago, and as the title threatens, it is not free from winsomeness.

Preferring the pared-down, more allusive contemporary stories to those with heavier traditional upholstery is not ungrateful. Simply, one wants to see the author, who is still in her mid-fifties, go on observing and absorbing, grappling and experimenting with time-shifts, and enjoying her own exuberance, without depending too heavily on her own memories of youth.

# Brandy and snap

## John Melmoth

RON BUTLIN  
The Sound of My Voice  
122pp. Edinburgh: Canongate. £7.95.  
026241 1262

Quite apart from having to traipse through life with a heftily symbolic name, Morris Magellan ("explorer extraordinaire", cartographer of depression) has a problem - booze: he can't get enough of it. He gets outside the stuff because his job as an executive with a biscuit manufacturer is driving him mad, because his wife and kids make him feel alien and hostile and because his father made such a point of not loving him. On the rare occasions when he is not actually pissed, he is preoccupied by the fact to the exclusion of all else - "When one drink is too much, the rest are never enough".

All this would be fair enough, were it not for his mauling search for ontological justification. He would have us believe that he is not drinking but drowning: "When you drink you cease struggling and slip gradually below the surface, easing yourself down fathom by fathom... letting the troubled waters close far above you." Idiomatic usage is roped into the service of self-pity: "You drink like a fish, for drink allows you to breathe under water." Ron Butlin describes *The Sound of My Voice* a shade oxymorically as a "painstakingly short novel". It is not, however, conspicuously dedicated to the search for *le mot juste*. For such a short piece it has its share of infelicities such as "completely wide awake" and "drunkness". Nor is it entirely purged of portentousness - "Death... is simply a failure to see far enough in the darkness." It does, nevertheless, take pains to dismantle that brand of joyless solipsism which speaks without irony of the daily struggle "to be yourself" and that form of self-hatred which is never far from melodrama - "you are thirty-four years old and nearly two thirds destroyed".

Morris could not get on with his dad and has been taking it out on everyone within reach ever since. He binds on about his inability to love, without, it would seem, recognizing how hard it must be for others to like his horrible contrast - warmth in nature, in voices, in hope, stricken by the chill and complexity of disappointment. "Circle of Prayer", where a single mother is reassured by a mental defective, allows the same cold sunshine at the end. More disturbingly, "Fits" is about the reactions of a preternaturally reserved wife to the killing of her neighbours.

The funeral sermon over these out-of-towners is pronounced, incidentally, by "the United Church minister, who usually took up the slack in the cases of no known affiliation". Humour is present everywhere, in this writing, as naturally as olives exude oil. When it is, exceptional, as in "Huskimo", a study of sensuality -

# Abandoned by the muse

## Lindsay Duguid

TERENCE DE VERE WHITE  
Chat Show  
207pp. Gollancz. £9.95.  
0575039108

Terence de Vere White's last novel *Johnnie Cross* (1983) concocted a persuasive and intriguing scenario for George Eliot's marriage, in her late sixties, to a man thirty years younger, a scenario which took in the man and the world he inhabited. His new book tackles a social rather than a literary mystery, and attempts to show what lies behind the apparent vacuity of the small screen by filling in the details of the life of Miles O'Malley, television presenter and professional Irishman, and providing authentic glimpses of his London life. From the less salubrious reaches of the Parnell Hotel, Lindsay Road, NW6 (which Miles owns), via the phusher purlieus of the New King's Road and Bohemian Clapham, to a final fatal encounter in Fleet Street, the background is as plausible as Miles's charm.

What led Miles to cross the water and become "the Brian Boru of the medium" is briefly recounted: the Roman Catholic childhood with superior friends at the Deanery; the father

who held the saloon bar spellbound and advised "Keep away from the women"; the successful business (Shannonwear) in a 1960s Ireland of RTE and Dublin boutiques. Miles's "discovery" ("He was someone special. He knew it always, but television had to tell him where he could demonstrate his quality") has brought him to William Trevor-land. Against this background we see Miles pitifully exposed. He has a grudge against the BBC. He looks into mirrors and does not like what he sees, has a rather florid taste in clothes, a hair-piece he hasn't the courage to wear, a weakness for betting, whisky and flash hotels; his sexual fantasies are absurdly lubricious evocations of *hours*. Abandoned by his muse, he feels life slipping away fast. "After I found my vocation", he recalls, "ordinary life became terribly dull." Television has been the ruin of Miles. Not only did it provide him with money, it had the power to give life meaning: "To be on television was to them the closest to God mere mortals were permitted to attain." In a precarious state since his forced retirement, he continually anticipates a relief from present dullness and a return to the public eye. An invitation to address the Alma-Tadema Society, written on lavender writing paper and signed "Lalage Dubonnet", seems to offer the chance to reminisce, settle old scores and grin publicly.

For the most part life keeps pace, just about, with Miles's fantasies, but now a new kind of reality - generally of a grim nature - breaks in. The junketings at the Alma-Tadema dinner are interrupted by the news that the Parnell Hotel has been set on fire and that hunchbacked Willie, his greatest fan and willing messenger, has been brutally murdered at Camden Town Underground station. The pleasures of getting to know his new friends in a lunatic household of Pre-Raphaelite relicts do not prepare Miles for finding the mutilated body of Lalage Dubonnet. The IRA, drugs, arson and murder entail visits to solicitors, and, worse, visits to the police. Life takes over from fantasy for a brief period before Miles is run down by two sinister men in a van. Despite these Dick Francis-ish elements, *Chat Show* is on the whole an old-fashioned entertainment. Miles and his milieu are undeniably engaging and, like a good chat-show guest, de Vere White slips in a scattering of good jokes, dropping bizarre names and quoting a full-blown *Evening Standard* paragraph: "The pall-bearers were all from the old sod. I saw Terry Wogan (47), wearing black glasses, Frank Delaney (25), Eamonn Andrews (99) and Henry Kelly (21)." Those who complain that the novel lacks decorum or a higher purpose, like those who complain that television is worthless, are condemned to dullness and will miss a lot.

# Tokyo story

## Richard Deveson

MATTHEW KNEALE  
Whore Banquets  
155pp. Gollancz. £9.95.  
0575039213

We don't really know why Daniel Thayne has fetched up in Tokyo; but then he doesn't either. In the East a Western youth as clueless as this is looking for trouble, and he finds it. He doesn't speak Japanese; he has lost his passport; he's earning an illegal pittance at a crummy language school; and he has spinelessly let himself get involved with a Japanese woman in her thirties who lives in a tiny apartment filled with Walt Disney soft toys. Keiko, the girl-

## Scientific Cat

It seems that Isaac Newton's cat  
(Her master absorbed by nature's laws)  
Ate the food left on his tray, grew fat.

Pondering the arrangement of her claws.  
Likewise the imprints of her feet,  
Would keep him further from his meat.

ROY FULLER

John Melmoth



# Latin American fiction and reality

Mario Vargas Llosa

The novel was forbidden in the Spanish Colonies by the Inquisition. The Inquisitors thought it as dangerous for the spiritual fate of the Indians as for their moral and political behaviour: in which, of course, they were absolutely right. We novelists must be grateful to the Spanish Inquisition for having discovered, before any critic did, the inevitably subversive nature of fiction. The prohibition included reading and publishing novels in the Colonies. There was no way to prevent a great number of them from being smuggled into our countries and we know, for example, that the first copies of *Don Quixote* entered America hidden in barrels of wine. We can only dream enviously of what kind of experience it was, in those times, in Spanish America, to read a novel: a sinful adventure in which, in order to abandon yourself to an imaginary world, you had to be prepared to face prison and humiliation.

Novels were not published in Spanish America until after the Wars of Independence. The first, *El Periquillo Sarmiento*, appeared in Mexico only in 1816. Yet although they were abolished for three centuries, the goal of the Inquisitors – a society free from the disease of fiction – was not achieved. The Inquisitors did not realize that the realm of fiction was larger and deeper than that of the novel. Nor could they imagine that the appetite for lies – that is, for escaping objective reality through illusions – was so powerfully rooted in the human spirit, that, once the vehicle of the novel was not available to satisfy it, the thirst for fiction would infect all the other disciplines and genres in which the written word could freely flow. By repressing and censoring the literary genre that had been specifically invented to give "the necessity of lying" a place, the Inquisitors achieved exactly the opposite of what they wanted: a world without novels, yes, but a world into which fiction had spread, contaminating practically everything: history, religion, poetry, science, art, speeches, journalism and people's daily habits.

We are still victims, in Latin America, of what we could call the revenge of the novel. We still have great difficulty in differentiating between fiction and reality, and this is probably one of the reasons why we are so impractical and inept, for instance, in political matters. But some good came, too, from this novelization of our whole life. Books like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Cortázar's short stories and Roa Bastos's novels would have been possible otherwise. The tradition from which this kind of literature sprang – in which we are exposed to a world reconstructed and subverted by fantasy – started, without doubt, in the chronicles of the conquest and discovery of America that represent for Latin Americans what the novels of chivalry represent for Europeans. I first read them under the influence of the historian who mastered the subject of the discovery and conquest of Peru by the Spaniards better than anyone else, yet who died without having written the book for which he had prepared himself all his life.

His name was Raúl Porras Barrenechea. He was a small, port-bellied man, with a large forehead and blue eyes which became impregnated with malice every time he mocked someone. He was the most brilliant, evocative, enchanting teacher I have ever had. In the big old house of San Marcos, the first university founded by the Spaniards in the New World, and which had already begun to fall into irreparable decay when I passed through it in the 1950s, his lectures on historical sources attracted so many listeners that it was necessary to arrive well in advance so as not to be left outside the classroom, listening together with dozens of students, literally hanging from doors and windows. Whenever Porras Barrenechea spoke, history became anecdote, gesture, adventure, colour, psychology. He depicted it in a series of murals which had the significance of a Renaissance painting and in which the determining factor of events was never impersonal forces – the geographical imperative, economic relations, divine providence – but a cast of certain superior individuals, whose audacity, genius, charisma or conspicuous insanity had imposed on each era and society a certain orientation and shape.

As well as this concept of history, which the

"scientific" historians already called "romantic" in an effort to discredit it, Porras Barrenechea demanded a degree of knowledge and documentary precision which none of his colleagues and critics at San Marcos has so far been able to equal. Those historians who dismissed him because he was more interested in simple "narrated" history than in giving it a social or economic interpretation have been less effective than he was in explaining to us that crucial event in the destiny of Europe and America: the destruction of the Inca Empire and the linking of its vast territories and peoples to the Western World. Because for him, although history had to have a dramatic quality, architectonic beauty, suspense, richness, a wide range of human types and the stylistic excellence of great fiction, everything in it also had to be scrupulously true.

In order to be able to narrate the discovery and conquest of Peru in this way, Porras Barrenechea, before anything else, had very carefully to evaluate his sources. It was necessary to examine thoroughly all the witnesses and documents of the event, so as to establish the degree of credibility of each. And in the numerous cases of deceitful testimony he had to find the reasons that led the authors to conceal, misrepresent or overpaint the facts so that, in the light of their peculiar limitations, those sources came to have a double meaning: both what they revealed and what they distorted. For forty years, he dedicated all his powerful intellectual energy to this task. The works he did publish constituted the preliminaries for what should have been his *magnum opus*. Once he was equipped to embark upon it, pressing on with assurance through the labyrinth of chronicles, letters, testaments, rhymes and ballads of the discovery and conquest, sudden death put an end to his encyclopaedic enterprise. As a result, all those interested in that era and in the men who lived in it have had to keep on reading the old but so far unsurpassed *History of the Conquest*, written by an American who never set foot in the country but who described it with extraordinary skill, William Prescott.

Dazzled by Porras Barrenechea's lectures, at one time I seriously considered the possibility of abandoning literature so as to dedicate myself to history. He had asked me to work with him as an assistant on an ambitious project on the general history of Peru, for which he was to write the volumes devoted to the Conquest and the Emancipation. For four years, I spent three hours a day, five days a week, in his dusty house in Colina Street, where the books, card-indexes and notebooks had slowly invaded everywhere except his bed and dining-table. My job was to read and take notes on the chroniclers' various themes, but principally on the myths and legends which both preceded and followed the discovery and conquest of Peru. The experience is unforgettable. History and literature – truth and falsehood, reality and fiction – mingle in Porras Barrenechea's sources in ways which are often inextricable. The thin line which separates one from the other frequently fades away, so that these worlds can intertwine with a completeness which, the more ambiguous it is, the more seductive it becomes. In the middle of the most cruel battle, the Virgin appears, and, taking the believers' side, charges the unlucky pagans. The shipwrecked conquistador Pedro Serrano actually lives out, on a tiny Caribbean island, the story of Robinson Crusoe that a novelist only invented centuries afterwards. The Amazons of Greek mythology materialize by the banks of the river, which had been given their name, to wound Pedro de Orellana's followers with their arrows, one arrow landing in the buttocks of the man who meticulously narrated this event, Fray Gaspar de Carvajal. Is that episode more fabulous than another, probably historically true, in which the poor soldier Manso de Leguizamón loses, in one night of ulcing, the solid gold wall of the Temple of the Sun in Cuzco given to him when the spoils of war were distributed? Or more fabulous than the unutterable outrages committed – always with a smile on his face – by the rebel Francisco de Carvajal, that octogenarian Devil of the Andes who merited being sung: "Oh mother, my poor little curly-haired, the wind is taking them away one by one, one by one", as he was being taken to the gallows where he was to be quartered, beheaded and burnt?

The chronicle, like Borges's tale *Two*

*Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*, repeatedly distils fiction from life. Does this mean that its testimony must be challenged from a historical point of view and accepted only as literature? Not at all. Its exaggerations and fantasies often reveal more about the reality of the era than its historical facts. Those astonishing miracles which from time to time enliven the tedious pages of *La crónica moralizada* of Padre Calanchi, or the sulphurous sacrileges of male and female demons which extirpators of idolatry like Padre Arriaga fastidiously catechize in the Indian villages so as to justify their devastations of idols, amulets, ornaments, handicrafts and tombs, teach us more about the innocence, fanaticism and stupidity of the era than the wisest of treatises. As long as one knows how to read them, everything is contained in these pages, written sometimes by men who hardly knew how to write and whom the unusual nature of contemporary events impelled to try to register them for posterity, to communicate the privilege they enjoyed, of being witnesses and actors in events which were changing the history of the world. Because they narrate these events under the passion of recently lived experience, they often relate things which to us seem like naive or cynical fantasies. For the people of the time, they were not so, but phantoms which credulity, surprise, fear and hatred had endowed with greater solidity and vitality than beings made of flesh and blood.

The conquest of the Tahuantinsuyo – the Empire of the Incas – by a handful of Spaniards is a fact that even now, having ruminated over all the explanations, we find hard to explain. The first wave of conquistadores, Pizarro and his companions, numbered less than two hundred (not counting the black slaves and Indian collaborators); when reinforcements started to arrive, this first wave had already dealt a mortal blow and had taken over an Empire which ruled over at least 20 million people. This was not a primitive society made up of barbaric tribes, like those the Spaniards had found in the Caribbean or in Darien, but a civilization which had reached a high level of social, military, agricultural and artisanal development which, in many senses, Spain itself had not achieved. The most remarkable aspect of this civilization, however, was not the paths which crossed the four *Suyos*, or regions, of its vast territory, the temples and fortresses, the irrigation systems or the complex administrative organization, but something on which all the chronicles agree: it had managed to eradicate hunger in that immense region, it was able to produce – and distribute all that it produced – in such a way that all its subjects had enough to eat.

Are the conquistadores' firearms, horses and armour enough to explain the immediate collapse of this Inca civilization at the first clash with the Spaniards? It is true that gunpowder, bullets and the charging of animals unknown to them, paralysed the Indians with a religious terror and inspired in them the sensation that they were fighting not against men, but against gods invulnerable to their arrows and slings. Even so, the Incas' numerical superiority was overwhelming. What is the profound explanation of this defeat, from which the Inca population never recovered? The answer may perhaps lie hidden in the moving account given by the chronicles – and particularly by the eyewitness Pedro Pizarro – of what happened in the Cajamarca Square when Pizarro captured the Inca Emperor Atahualpa. At the precise moment of the Emperor's capture, before battle begins, his armies give up the fight as if managed by a magic force. The slaughter is indescribable, and entirely one-sided: the Spaniards discharge their arquebuses, take their pikes and swords and charge on horseback against a bewildered crowd who, having witnessed the capture of their god and master, seem unable to defend themselves or even to run away. In the space of a few minutes, the army which had defeated Huáscar and dominated all the northern provinces of the Empire disintegrates.

The vertical and totalitarian structure of the Tahuantinsuyo was, without doubt, more harmful to its survival than all the conquistadores' firearms and iron weapons. As soon as the Inca Emperor – the vortex towards which all wills converged in the search for inspiration and vitality, the axis around which the entire society was organized and upon whom de-

pendent the life and death of every person from the richest to the poorest – was captured, no one knew how to act. So they did the only thing they could do, with heroism, but without breaking the thousand-and-one taboos and precepts which regulated their existence: they let themselves be killed. And that was the fate of dozens and perhaps hundreds of Indians, stultified by the confused reverance into which they fell when the Inca Emperor, the vivifying force of their universe, was captured before their eyes.

The Indians who let themselves be knifed or blown to pieces, that sombre afternoon in the Cajamarca Square, lacked any ability to make their own decisions, either with the sanction of authority or indeed against it, and were incapable of taking individual initiatives, of acting according to the changing circumstances. Those 180 Spaniards who had ambushed them, and were now slaughtering them, did possess such ability. It was this which created so immense an inequality between the civilizations. As in the other great non-Western civilizations, the individual hardly existed in the pyramidal and theocratic Tahuantinsuyo, whose achievements had always been collective and anonymous: carrying the gigantic stones of the citadel of Machu Picchu or of Ollantaytambo Fortress up the steepest of peaks, directing water to the slopes of the Cordillera by building terraces which even today enable the most desolate places to be irrigated, and making paths which joined regions otherwise separated by an impossible terrain. A state religion which took away individual free will and crowned the authorities' decisions with the aura of a divine mandate turned the Tahuantinsuyo into a beehive: laborious, efficient, stoic. But its immense power was in fact very fragile: it rested completely on the sovereign-god's shoulders, the man whom the Indian had to serve and to whom he owed obedience, abdicating his individuality.

Those who, rightly, are shocked by the abuses and crimes of the Conquest, must bear in mind that the first to condemn them were men who came to America with the conquistadores and abandoned their ranks in order to collaborate with the defeated, whose offering they denounced with an indignation which still moves us today. Padre Las Casas was the most active of these non-conformists who rebelled against their government's policies and fought against their fellow-countrymen in the name of a moral principle which for them came before any nation or state.

The pages of the chronicles of the Conquest and the discovery depict that crucial, bloody moment of phantasmagoria, in which, disguised as a handful of invading treasure-hunters, the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Spanish language, Greece, Rome and the Renaissance, the notion of individual sovereignty and of the chance of living in freedom, reached the shores of the Empire of the Sun. So it was that the Peruvians were born; and also, of course, the Bolivians, Chileans, Ecuadorians, Colombians. Almost five centuries later this is still an unfinished business. We have not yet, properly speaking, seen the light. We don't yet constitute real nations.

Our contemporary reality is still impregnated with the violence and marvels that those first texts of our literature – those novels disguised as history or historical books corrupted by fiction – told us about. At least one basic problem is the same. Two cultures, one Western and modern, the other aboriginal and archaic, scarcely coexist, separated as they are by the exploitation and discrimination that the former exercises over the latter. Our countries are in a deep sense more a fiction than a reality. In the eighteenth century, in France, the name of Peru rang with a golden echo, and an expression was then born, "ce n'est pas le Pérou", which is used to mean that something is not as rich and extraordinary as its legendary name suggests. Well, "Le Pérou, ce n'est pas le Pérou." It never was, at least for the greater part of its inhabitants, that fabulous country of legends and fictions, but rather an artificial gathering of men of different languages, customs and traditions, people whose only common denominator was having been condemned by history to live together without knowledge, or loving each other.

The immense opportunities brought by the civilization that discovered and conquered

America have been beneficial only to a minority – sometimes a very small one – whereas the great majority has only the negative share of the conquest; that is, contributing with serfdom and sacrifice, with misery and neglect, to the prosperity and refinement of the Westernized élites. One of our worst defects and our best fictions is to believe that our miseries have been imposed on us from abroad, that others have always had the responsibility for our problems – for instance, the conquistadores. There are countries in Latin America – Mexico is the best example – in which the "Spaniards" are even now severely indicted for what "they" did to the Indians. Did "they" really do it? We did it. We are the conquistadores. They were our parents and grandparents, who came to our shores and gave us the names we have and the language we speak. They gave us also the habit of shifting on to the Devil the responsibility for any evil we do. Instead of making amends for what they did, improving and correcting our relationship with our indigenous compatriots, mixing with them and dissolving ourselves together into a new culture which would have been a kind of synthesis of the best of both, we Westernized Latin Americans have persevered in the worst habits of our forebears, behaving towards the Indians during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the Spanish behaved towards the Aztecs and the Incas. And sometimes even worse. We must remember that in countries like Chile and Argentina, it was during the Republic, not during the Colony, that the native cultures were systematically exterminated. In many of our countries, we share, in spite of the pious "indigenist" rhetoric of our men of letters and politicians, the mentality of the conquistadores.

Only in countries where the native population was small or non-existent, or where the aboriginals were practically liquidated, can we talk of integrated societies. In the others, a discreet, sometimes unconscious, but very effective apartheid prevails. There, integration is extremely slow, and the price the native has to pay to be integrated is high: renunciation of his culture – his language, his beliefs, his traditions and customs – and adoption of that of his ancient masters.

Maybe there is no realistic way to integrate our societies other than by asking the Indians to pay that price; maybe the ideal – that is, the preservation of the primitive cultures of America – is a utopia incompatible with this other and more urgent goal: the establishment of societies in which social and economic inequalities among citizens will be reduced to humanly tolerable limits and where everybody can enjoy a decent and free life. In any case, we have been unable to reach any of those ideals and are still trying, as when we first entered Western history, to find out what we are and what our future will be.

That is why it is very useful for Latin Americans to review the literature that gives testimony of the discovery and the Conquest. In the chronicles we not only dream about the time when our fantasies and our realities seemed to be incestuously confused; in them we also learn about the roots of problems and challenges that are still there, unsolved. And in these half-literary, half-historical pages we also perceive, formless, mysterious, fascinating, the promise of something new and formidable, something that if it ever turned into reality, would enrich the world and improve civilization. Of this promise we have only had, until now, sporadic manifestations. But we have the obligation to strive not only in our fictions; we must not stop until our promise passes from our dreams and words into our daily lives, and becomes objective reality. We must not permit our countries to disappear, without writing in real life, as my dear teacher the historian Porras Barrenechea failed to do, the definitive masterpiece we have been preparing ourselves to accomplish: since the three caravels stumbled on to our coasts.

This is an abridged version of the *Neill Gunn Lecture* given in Edinburgh last October.

The publication details preceding Stefan Collini's review of *Les Liens de mémoire* (January 16) wrongly gave the three volumes entitled *La Nation* as Volumes Two to Four of the work; they are in fact the three parts of Volume Two.

## Letters

### Commonwealth Literature

Sir, – Lorna Sage pays a welcome set of compliments to the Commonwealth Institute (Behind the Lines, January 16) for its enterprising commitment to post-colonial literatures in English, though it could probably do without the glancing shots of her backhand. I'm wondering on what authority, however, she writes of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, whose members, according to her, "simply line up to discuss their own national literatures in terms of their own critical fashions". I do not recall her being present at the Association's triennial conferences in Jamaica (1971), Uganda (1974), India (1977), Fiji (1980), Canada (1983) or Singapore (1986), or at any of the European gatherings of the Association. If she had been she might not have written so dismissively. Indeed, the range of venues where ACLALS has met is some indication of its truly international character, as Ms Sage may see for herself if she cares to turn up for the 1989 conference in England rather than report on it by hearsay.

I am not quite sure what is wrong with having "Leavisite students of Indian literature and feminist-deconstructionist New Zealanders in simultaneous parallel sessions", since it is the aim of ACLALS's events to air several critical views rather than to hammer away relentlessly at one, but, for the record, we had at the Singapore conference last year a particular emphasis on mixed sessions, to such an extent that I found myself on the last day trying to sum up from the chair a trio of papers on Australian and Canadian landscape literature, on Anand, Ngugi and Rushdie as historical witnesses, and on the recently deceased Alex La Guma and Bessie Head.

In 1989 Commonwealth comparisons will be our major theme, between different national literatures, usages of English, types of critical approach. We may even have a session comparing serious literary discussion with bar-room gossip, in which case Ms Sage will be a welcome panellist.

ALASTAIR NIVEN.  
Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 27 Russell Square, London WC1.

### Dumézil's Ideology

Sir, – David Pocock's dismissal (January 2) of the Marxist reinterpretation of Indo-European social ideology which I offer in the final chapter of *Myth, Cosmos, and Society* comes as no shock, nor does his preference for the theories of Georges Dumézil. I am surprised, however, by Pocock's charge that I err in characterizing Dumézil's model of "ideology as idiosyncratic and depoliticized". When he first began to speak of "ideology", Dumézil himself noted the unusual nature of his usage, saying that he viewed myth, ritual, theology, patterns of social organization, and the like as all "subordinated to something more profound, which orients them, groups them, makes of them a unity, and which I propose to call, in spite of other usages of the word, *ideology*". Going further, he stated that ideology is "a conception and an appreciation of the great forces that animate the world and society, and also the relations between them. The presence of 'appreciation' here is extraneous, as is the fact that neither here nor elsewhere did Dumézil ever acknowledge the possibility that ideology can mystify sociopolitical relations as well as inform them. For all that his understanding of ideology was depoliticized, I have tried to show elsewhere (TLS, October 3, 1986) that Dumézil's writings were hardly apolitical. There is more to say on this, and Jonathan Benthall rightly calls for an intellectual biography of Dumézil. For the moment, it suffices to observe that although one may prefer Dumézil's theories to mine (or vice versa) on strictly political grounds, scholarly prudence requires that consideration of evidence ought to precede and contribute to one's ultimate judgment. I thus particularly regret Mr Pocock's failure to discuss so much as a single primary datum relevant to this debate.

BRUCE LINCOLN.  
Department of Humanities, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455.

### Sergei Eisenstein

Sir, – It is disingenuous of Herbert Marshall (Letters, January 23) to claim that I have found only "four minor errors" in the translation of Eisenstein's *Immortal Memories* that he edited: those four were representative and it would hardly have been fair to bore your readers with a full catalogue of woes. I am, however, pleased that he has admitted to those errors.

It is also disingenuous of him to claim that I have not read his Acknowledgements: I am indeed intimately acquainted with them and find them wanting. To state that the memoirs "appeared in the first volume of his *Selected Works*" is not, at least to a non-specialist, a clear acknowledgement of that as their source. In any case it refers specifically to the text of the memoirs and not to the notes and chronology that accompany them. In fact, Mr Marshall implies specific credit for the latter on page xv, although I am prepared to concede that this is probably the result of careless wording rather than any deliberate attempt to mislead. My argument was, however, that it was less than fully honest to attack the soundness of Soviet scholarship while borrowing from it so freely: Marshall does not deny that borrowing and he certainly does not acknowledge it in the book.

Lastly it is disingenuous of Mr Marshall to remark that I "now admit that Soviet scholarship was given to 'falsification of so much evidence in the past'". I have never denied it, but then I have never had to, because I have never been an apologist for the Soviet, or indeed any other, political system. My task too is to try and tell the truth. On that, at least, I hope we can agree, even if we do not always agree on what that truth is.

RICHARD TAYLOR.  
Department of Political Theory and Government,  
University College of Swansea, Singleton Park,  
Swansea.

### Vatican Two

Sir, – May I, because I am an editor rather than an author here, make some comments upon Peter Hebblethwaite's review (January 9) of *Vatican II: By those who were there* in defence of my collaborators?

In an otherwise generous review, the reviewer says of the Cardinals – there are four writing – "what they have to say has been said many times over". I would be glad of chapter and verse in support of that assertion. I will counter-assert that what Cardinal Suenens of Malines offers was presented first in a congress

### AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Keith Andrews is Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Scotland. His books include *Adam Elsheimer*, 1977.  
Michael Angelo teaches Medieval History at the University of Edinburgh. His *Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204* was published in 1984.  
Peter Atkins is the author of *The Creation*, 1982.  
Joseph Brodsky's collection of essays, *Less than One*, was published last year.  
Brian Case is the author, with Stan Brit, of *The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Jazz*, 1978.  
Alan Chambers is a lecturer in the History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Sydney.  
Cairns Craig is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.  
Alastair Fowler's most recent book is *Kinds of Literature: An introduction to the theory of genres and modes*, 1982.  
Charles Fox's most recent publication, with Max Harrison and Eric Thacker, is *The Essential Jazz Records, Volume One: Ragtime to Swing*, 1984.  
Anthony Gless is a lecturer in Contemporary History and Politics at Brunel University. His *The Secrets of the Service: British intelligence and communist subversion* will be published later this year.  
Christopher Johnson is Economic Adviser to Lloyds Bank and editor of *Lloyds Bank Review*. He is also a specialist adviser to the Treasury Select Committee of the House of Commons.  
Philip Kitcher is Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, San Diego.  
Jan Maclean is a Fellow and Praelector in French of the Queen's College, Oxford. He is the author of *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, published in paperback in 1983.  
Michael R. Marcus is Professor of History at the University of Toronto. His most recent book, *The Unwanted: European refugees in the twentieth century*, was published last year.  
John McManis is Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the University of Oxford. His *Death and the Enlightenment* was published in 1981.  
Dervla Murphy is the author of *Eight Feet in the Andes*, 1983, and *Muddling Through in Madagascar*, 1985.  
David Parker is a lecturer in Modern History at the University of Leeds, and author of *The Making of French Absolutism*, 1983.  
David Pryor-Jones's most recent novel, *The Afternoon Sun*, was published last year.  
Colin Russ is Vice-President of the British Chess Problem Society.  
Paul Smith is Professor of Modern History at the University of Southampton.  
Nicholas Turner is an Assistant Keeper in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum. He is co-author of *Drawings by Raphael*, the catalogue which accompanied the exhibition of Raphael's drawings from English collections held at the British Museum in 1983.  
Mario Vargas Llosa's most recent novel is *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta*, which appeared in Spanish in 1984, and in English last year.  
Robert Waller is the author of *The Dukeries Transformed: The social and political development of a nineteenth-century conflict*, 1983.  
Sir Alan Walters was from 1981 to 1983 Personal Economic Adviser to the Prime Minister. At present he is at the World Bank in Washington, DC.  
J. F. Watkins is Professor Emeritus of Medical Microbiology at the Welsh National School of Medicine.  
John Weightman is the author of *The Concept of the Avant-Garde: Explorations in Modernism*, 1973.

John Co. 1.16



## COMMENTARY

## The Perdition affair

David Pryce-Jones

*Perdition*, a play by a self-proclaimed Marxist, Jim Allen, might very well not have packed the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, where it was due to be staged this week. The cancellation of the production by the Theatre's Council none the less brings into focus the issue of what is acceptable as dramatization of historical events, "faction" in a word, and what is unacceptable distortion and lying.

At the centre of the play, whose script I have just read, is the fate of Dr Rudolf Kastner (here called Yaron), who was a Zionist leader in Budapest in 1944, and, as such, had to treat with the Nazis, often in the person of Adolf Eichmann, intent upon the deportation and mass-murder of the Hungarian Jews. As part of a deal imposed by Eichmann, Kastner arranged for a train of 1,684 Jews, including members of his own family, to leave for Palestine. Eichmann's offer was only one step in a cruel deception aimed at raising hopes that extensive bargains might be made, and Jewish lives saved thereby.

The play, which has the framework of a trial before a British judge, has no interest in depicting the position in which Kastner found himself, nor the choices confronting him. Its purpose is to link the Zionists to the Nazis as deliberate accomplices. Before and during the war, Zionists are portrayed as a special class of rich capitalists, who not only shared Nazi ideology but had a common interest with the Nazis in sacrificing the Jewish proletariat.

Historians, including Martin Gilbert and David Cesarini, have pointed out the numerous fabrications used by Allen in order to construct this tale of conspiracy. For instance, in the play Kastner approaches Eichmann to make a deal, rather than the other way about. Zionist leaders such as Ben-Gurion and Weizmann are accused of wanting to save only those Jews who might serve their political ambitions of creating a Zionist state. Zionists in Hungary are supposed even to have turned over to the

Nazis three agents from Palestine parachuted in to organize resistance. Historians, including the two already mentioned, and Jewish organizations have drawn these and other falsehoods to the attention of the Royal Court's Council, whose members did not seem to have realized, until then, quite what sort of an issue they were facing. The decision to withdraw the production was announced by the theatre's artistic director, Max Stafford-Clark, who nevertheless defended the play, accepting only that it might "cause great distress to sections of the community" – a euphemism in which lurks a further example of conspiracy theory, that this is all "censorship" and brought about by unduly anxious Jews.

The truly hidden agenda is that Israel and Zionism were first equated with Nazism in Moscow in the early 1950s, when Stalin and then his successors decided on a policy of backing the Arab states. Subsequent wars in the Middle East have made the equation a commonplace of Soviet propaganda. Massive Soviet energy has been put into re-writing Jewish history from the rise of Hitler onwards. If it could be shown that contacts between Jews and Nazis had not been acts of despairing expediency but positive collaboration, then clearly Israel could not be a legitimate refuge for Holocaust survivors.

The case of Dr Kastner is here frequently pressed into service. Lest anyone should still miss the point, the play concludes with a penitent Kastner/Yaron hoping that Israel will be dismantled and returned to the Arabs.

Many writers, Hannah Arendt prominent among them, have been hard on Kastner. When eventually he was brought to trial in Israel, it was said that he had "sold his soul to the Devil". Two survivors from Hungary shot him dead in the street. To extrapolate from this individual tragic fate that all Zionists are guilty is in itself a characteristic antisemitic generalization. No less antisemitic is the distortion whereby some Jews are made responsible for the mass murder of others. The decision not to stage *Perdition* indicates that such stuff is best left to the official Soviet agencies.



A study for "Diego Martelli" by Degas, from the exhibition reviewed below.

## The insights of artifice

Frances Spalding

The Private Degas  
Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, until  
February 28

Chance played no part in Degas's method. Divergent sources were pillaged, sketches tirelessly made, ingenious pictorial strategies devised for the processing and reprocessing of material. Chance effects were achieved with extreme deliberation; behind the arbitrary configuration or pose stilled in mid-action lay cunning, artifice and convention. Though allied to the Impressionists in his desire to render modern life, he believed the study of nature to be worthless, and worked not on the spot but in the privacy of his studio. This exhibition offers an insight into the way he melded borrowings from the Old Masters,

photography and commercial illustration with observations from life. It also reflects on the restless refashioning of his vocabulary of poses as he strengthened and simplified his ideas. Degas, as presented here, is thinking aloud.

*The Private Degas*, therefore, examines no personal obsession other than his unending pursuit of the motif. Richard Thomson, the selector and author of the accompanying book, musters visual support for Degas's famous disclaimer: "no art was ever less spontaneous than mine. What I do is the result of reflection and study of the great masters; of inspiration, spontaneity, temperament. . . I know nothing." Some 500 drawn and painted copies from Old Masters are to be found among his oeuvre. Those included in this exhibition lend poses and ideas to nearby points, and in some instances, create nodal points from which spring variations upon a theme. We are shown how Degas's freeze-like arrangements in certain racecourse scenes look back to his study of horses and riders in the Parthenon frieze and in Benozzo Gozzoli's "The Journey of the Magi". His visual memory must have been acute: Delacroix's "Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople", which Degas copied as a student, provided, in its image of a half-naked, grieving woman, a motif he recycled in a late series of nudes drying themselves, done in pastel and lithograph.

Degas's practice legitimizes quotation-hunting. Following an earlier adept, Thomson detects the clandestine presence of an Annunciation behind "The Duet" (c1868-70) and promotes a painting by Veronese as a possible source, though its Virgin does not convey the fearful surprise that characterizes the gesture of one of Degas's performers. Less easy to pinpoint are the abstract or compositional principles that Degas assimilated from the Old Masters he studied. But the placing of Mantegna's "Calvary", which Degas copied in the Louvre, at the start of the show suggests that his debt to this master of the unexpected angle was not insignificant. Through the handling of pose, glance, interval and perspective, Mantegna leads the eye through a cat's cradle of directional movements activating the entire image. Likewise Degas, even when he fills two-thirds of a long narrow canvas merely with a blank wall and a double bass, pulls attention in and across, allowing the melodic frieze of dancers to culminate in the top right-hand corner. Frequently his use of visual stretch is the controlling ingredient in his design.

Careful selection and loans from foreign collections make this a rewarding exhibition. It affirms that Degas, reaching after the full realization of his ideas, achieved a strength capable of incorporating subtle moods and evanescent feelings. His art and life are hedged with paradox. Not least of these is that this proud, aloof individual felt such admiration for the work of others that even in his sixties he was still subjecting himself to the discipline of copying. Nor could he ever pass a certain spot in Paris without recalling his glimpse of Delacroix, pressed for time and hurrying across the road.

6 To thee, sweet Nell, when shadows fall  
Jug-jug! Jug-jug!  
I here in thrall  
My wanton thoughts do turn,  
Walks she out yet with Byrne?  
Moves Hyde his hand amid her skirts  
As erst? I ask, and Echo answers: Certes,  
Samuel Beckett, *Wait*.

7 Now, too, the feathered warblers tune their notes  
Around, and charm the listening grove—the lark!  
The linnell chaffinch! bullfinch! goldfinch!  
greenfinch!

But oh, to me no joy can they afford!  
Nor rose, nor wallflower, nor smart gillyflower,  
Nor polyanthus mean, nor dapper daisy,  
Nor William sweet, nor marjoram—nor lark.  
Unset, nor all the finches of the grove!  
R. B. Sheridan, *The Critic*, II, 2.

8 Bleating one, little antlers,  
O lanterner we like  
delightful the clamouring  
from your glen you make.

O leafy-oak, clumpy-leaved,  
you are high above trees.  
O hazel, little clumpy-branch—  
the put-smell of hazels.  
Flann O'Brien, *At Swim-Two-Birds*.

9 Oh, ours is a land  
Where the living is grand,  
And the men are as fearless as sharks;  
The women are pure,  
And we always are sure  
That our children will all toe their marks.  
San, San Lo-ron-zo!  
What a rich, lucky island are we!  
Our enemies quail,  
For they know they will fall  
Against people so reverent and free.  
Kurt Vonnegut, *Car's Cradle*, chapter 63.

10 O Eloquence and what art thou?  
Ay what art thou? because we cried  
And everybody cried inside  
When they came out their eyes were red—  
And it was your doing Father said.  
E. Nesbit, *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*, chapter 4.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

## Competition No 314

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than February 27. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 314" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on March 6.

1 That I was anxious for the success of a Work which had employed much of my time and labour, I do not wish to conceal; but whatever doubts I at any time entertained, have been entirely removed by the very favourable reception with which it has been honored. That reception has excited my best exertions to render my book more perfect; and in this endeavour I have had the assistance not only of some of my particular friends, but of many other learned and ingenious men, by which I have been enabled to rectify some mistakes, and to enrich the Work with many valuable additions.

2 I am at a loss how to describe the success of the work without betraying the vanity of the writer. The first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand; and the bookseller's property was twice invaded by the pirates of Dublin. My book was on every table, and almost on every toilet. . . nor was the general voice disturbed by the barking of any profane critic. . . I was . . . encouraged by some domestic and foreign testimonials of applause; and the second and third volumes inevitably rose in sale and reputation in a level with the first. But the public is seldom wrong; and I am inclined to believe that, especially in the beginning, they are more prolix and less entertaining than the first.

3 He said he did not know the dirty thing he had been thinking, he had just read the work; his teacher had misquoted him; and Percival Petherick, I kept the new enlightened gentleman. Then around me arose such a noisy sort of interest, as when a really splendid bit of scandal is being whispered about. In what my fellow-authors kept scrupulously silent, he said a bit of the last night talk to them. . . one

submits to the process of publication as to a necessary evil: as souls are said to submit to the necessary evil of being born into the flesh. The wind bloweth where it listeth. And one must submit to the processes of one's day. Personally, I have no belief in the vast public. I believe that only the winnowed few can care. But publishers, like thistle, must set innamorable seeds on the wind, knowing most will miscarry.

Competition No 309  
Joint winners (£25 each): Alistair Elliot and D. Hawes  
Answers: (All the quotations are examples of poetry in works of fiction).

1 *Dim Gulf* was my first book (free verse); *Night Rite*  
Come next; then *Febe's Cup*, my final float  
In that damp carnival, for now I turn  
Everything "Poems", and no longer aquaria.  
Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*, Canto Four.

2 If thee thyself couldst only see  
Thy greatness that is and yet to be,  
Thou wouldst feel joy-béauty-postasy.  
They are at they feet, earth-moon-sea; the trinity.  
Saul Bellow, *Seize the Day*, chapter 4.

3 Look down, Conquistador,  
There on the valley's broad green floor,  
There lies the lake, the jewelled cities gleam,  
Chinon and Tacapan  
Await the coming Man;  
Look down on Mexico, Conquistador,  
Land of your golden dream.  
Aldous Huxley, *After Play*, chapter 6.

4 Since first I beheld you, Adele,  
While dancing the cello,  
I have remained faithful to the thought of you;  
My freedom has departed from me,  
I care no longer for all other negroes;  
I have no heart left for them.  
You have such grace and cunning—  
You are like the Congo serpent.  
Ronald Firbank, *Caprice*, chapter 2.

5 Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her;  
If you can brace high, butice for her too,  
Till she cry "Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing  
lover."  
I must leave you!  
F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, epigraph.

## Glory bound

James Campbell

JAMES BALDWIN  
The Amen Corner  
Tricycle Theatre

Not many people remember S. Randolph Edmonds's *Bad Man* or Owen Dodson's *Divine Comedy* or Louis Peterson's *Take a Giant Step* or, for that matter, any other black American drama before the 1950s. Writing about Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), James Baldwin remarked, "never in the history of the American theatre had so much of the truth of black people's lives been seen on the stage. Black people ignored the theatre because the theatre ignored them." This is generous to Hansberry: after all, his own play, *The Amen Corner*, predates *Raisin* by four years (it made its first and, until now, only visit to London in 1965). Together, these two writers helped to lay the foundations of a modern black theatre in the United States. Both plays are family-based and solidly realistic (not unusually for writers working in an embryonic tradition) – kitchen-sink, in fact, except that, in *The Amen Corner*, above the sink towers the altar.

*The Amen Corner* is an upstairs-downstairs drama: upstairs, in her "store-front" church, Margaret Alexander preaches the gospel to a glory-bound congregation which includes her teenage son, David. Downstairs in the kitchen a more mundane story is in train: her hard-living, jazz-musician husband Luke has turned up out of the blue, and young David – regarded by his mother and all the brothers and sisters and elders of the church as a promising gospel pianist – has a mind to follow his father's example and live not with eyes raised to heaven but in the here and now.

Instead of rejecting her son and his devilish new fancy for boogie-woogie, Sister Margaret eventually uses his example to question her own role in the church – is her faith a rock or

merely a refuge? Luke, meanwhile, has been (rather crudely) disposed of, and the brothers and sisters upstairs – who, for all their holy name-dropping, have revealed themselves as somewhat less than merciful to the soul-searching Margaret – continue their hand-clappin' and tambourine-shakin' all the way, one supposes, to the judgment day. It might finally be said of them what one of their number earlier told Margaret: "I sure hope you makes it to heaven – because you's missed every other train."

James Baldwin was, briefly in the 1930s, Brother Baldwin, preaching in Harlem storefront churches. The story of David was also, in another form, the story of his first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), and later, in the essay *The Fire Next Time* (1963), he related the tale of how Brother Baldwin left the church and went to live – as David's father says of him in *The Amen Corner* – in the world.

Later still, Baldwin's increasingly fearsome polemic would be directed against the forces which, he considered, made it almost impossible for a talented black boy like David to live anywhere, anyhow, in the United States; but in the mid-1950s, at the start of his career, he nurtured a stronger faith in the willingness of people to change than perhaps he does today. White people are not even mentioned in *The Amen Corner*. It may be dramatically naive and predictable at times, but it is always authentic and its spirit of youthful optimism, more than thirty years on, is still appealing.

Anton Phillips's well-managed production for the Carib Theatre avoids the trap of relying too heavily on gospel gimmickry (although much care has been taken with the music: Brazil Meade, president of the London Community Gospel Choir, is musical director). Carmen Munroe is effectively stiff-lipped and rousing, by turns, as Margaret; Sylvester Williams conveys David's confused determination; and Al Matthews as Luke, though he is mainly confined to a sketched, seems as if he really has seen enough of that sporting life.

## A vocational vacation

Zachary Leader

PHILIP HARRY  
Holiday  
Old Vic

*Holiday* is a society comedy with a message. Up-and-coming Johnny (Malcolm McDowell) falls for Julia Seton (Cherie Lunghi), of the banking Setons of Wall Street. But it is really Julia's sister Linda (Mary Steenburgen) he should marry; for it is Linda who shares his free-spirited energy and idealism. This only becomes clear to the protagonists after Father (Don Fellows) and the forces of convention scotch Johnny's dream of a break: an open-ended "holiday" in Europe. Julia takes Father's side ("At bottom, she's a very dull girl", notes her brother); Linda realizes she's free to make a play for Johnny; the curtain falls with the true lovers, each in turn, declaring independence from work, convention, and the pointless accumulation of money.

Linda can afford this gesture because she's a Seton. Johnny, who comes from nowhere (Baltimore, actually), can afford it because he's a natural-born capitalist, having just made a bundle on the stock market. (Is it not types like Johnny – dreamers and risk-takers – who make the real fortunes?) Johnny doesn't mean to bum around Europe forever; he just wants time off to "live". Like Linda (and her poor, alcoholic brother, Ned), he knows there's more to life than boring old business. This is the play's "message", and its limitations are pretty obvious, nowhere more so than in the depiction of Johnny's wealthy bohemian friends, the Potters, who are meant to be truly liberated. The Potters (Clare Clifford and Geoffrey Burridge) are Linda's and Johnny's ideals; but they're so silly, and so thinly drawn, that their lives seem pointless and parasitic.

Lindsay Anderson's handsome production is unembarrassed by such difficulties. Any play about Wall Street money written a year before

the crash, and blithely assuming the virtues of risk and speculation, is ripe for directorial hindsight. Yet all of the production's most intelligently sombre moments are true to Barry's spirit: that is, never question his nebulous ethos of "life", or relate it to any larger emptiness or malaise. I kept waiting for a Chekhovian "twang", a touch of the *Heartbreak Houses*. That it never came is, I suppose, a sign of Anderson's respect for the play, though it throws its weaknesses into relief.

Barry's feelings about the Setons and their ilk were deeply ambivalent, a fact no less clear to his contemporaries than to us. Chief among *Holiday*'s virtues, in addition to its well-bred comic flow, is the way it treats its villains, the blocking figures. Though Father is every inch the *senex*, and quite incapable of understanding Johnny's and Linda's point of view (he calls it "deliberately unAmerican") he's not just a fool. Don Fellows neatly catches his mixture of obtuseness and iron resolve, while Mary Steenburgen's endearingly gawky Linda rightly registers fear at his disapproval, for all her sense that he's ludicrous. As for Julia, Father's eventual ally, she too is given strengths and virtues (as well as several wittily scornful lines about idleness). Only at the very end is she allowed to dwindle into caricature, a process bravely resisted by Cherie Lunghi's intelligently restrained performance.

The cast as a whole is first-rate, though special mention must be given to Frank Grimes's Ned, the source of the play's best lines, and of the production's most powerful moment, at the end of the second Act. I have never seen a subtler impersonation of drunkenness. Malcolm McDowell is too old for Johnny, and no Cary Grant, but he is amiable, alert, easy, even when being ardent. It is the playwright's fault, not McDowell's or Anderson's, that Johnny is made to seem a bit dim in the third Act, falling for Julia's "compromise" (to put off the open-ended holiday), taking forever to realize she's wrong for him, or that his feelings for Linda amount to love.

## Sour remembrances

John Weightman

EUGÈNE IONESCO  
Journeys Among the Dead  
Riverside Studios

Ionesco is usually referred to, along with Samuel Beckett, as an exponent of the Theatre of the Absurd, but in fact it can be argued that he ceased being a purely Absurdist playwright a long while ago. Absurdism is a cluster of metaphysical perceptions – about the contingency of man in the absence of "God", about the uncertainty of personal identity, about language as a film of pseudo-intelligibility on the surface of consciousness, and so on. These perceptions were given admirable fictional expression in the early novels of Sartre and Camus and then, in a brilliant imaginative leap, were first transferred to the stage in *La Cantatrice chauve* and *En attendant Godot*.

Ionesco continued to be predominantly Absurdist, let us say, up to *Les Chaises* (1952), in which the proliferating chairs are still the objective correlates of phenomenological bewilderment. But with *Rhinoceros* (1958), the shift to overt symbolism of a traditional kind is quite clear. The beast represents the dehumanization caused by any form of totalitarian hysteria and, at the same time, the paranoid fear of the individual consciousness that it may be obliterated by collective pressure. *Rhinoceros*, far from being avant-gardist, stands in perfect structuralist balance with Maeterlinck's symbolist fantasy, *L'Oiseau bleu* (1909), which was also, in its time, a world-famous play. The *Belle époque* bluebird is a bright, aerial emblem of conceivable earthly bliss, whereas, two world wars later, the grey, blundering pachyderm embodies *la pesanteur* as opposed to *la grâce*, to use the theological terms popularized in the 1950s through the writings of Simone Weil. All Ionesco's subsequent work has been full of religious nostalgia, also expressed by alternations between the light and the dark; it accepts dream imagery, superstitiously I would say, as being always "truer" than the perceptions of the waking state, and it draws on autobiographical material to which the author tries, only intermittently, to give universal import.

*Voyage chez les morts* (1980) continues the tendency, although by now symbolism has declined, leaving little besides autobiography.

## Kindergarten gothic

David Nokes

SIMON GRAY  
After Pilkington  
BBC2

Simon Gray's latest television play is a teasing generic riddle, which switches from satire to farce and from farce to melodrama, beginning with whippers of Pinter and concluding with a Hitchcockian bang. Set in Oxford, its opening exchanges of donnish point-scoring suggest echoes of *Accident* and *Butley* until academic games are gradually replaced by a more sinister nursery variety. While the men play at humiliating each other with fast cars, badminton and television contracts, the woman Penny (Miranda Richardson) wanders in the wood in her Liberty dress and children's sandals like a lost little girl. A good deal of mannered imprecision over names sounds like parody Pinter. Is Penny really Prudence or Patch? Is Pinter really Piglet? Is the lovesick student called Edward or Edmund? Is Potty the same as Perks? Such questions do not mask problems of identity but circle round the characters, enclosing them in a never-never land of literary pastiche. One diversionary aside on the name of a pub – the Cat's Whiskers was it, or the Cat's Pyjamas maybe? – is protracted until even the most undetecting of viewers must scent that the real name of the place is the Red Herring. A murdered don (Pilkington), a mad scientist, named Boris, and a scattering of false trails more profligate than Christie in her prime, contribute to a style of kindergarten gothic.

The central character, Jean, is dreaming about his past in a series of disjointed scenes, which occasionally end in verbal delirium. Ionesco was nearly seventy when he wrote the play, but Jean is played by a young man because, as the author claims, one doesn't age in one's dreams or one's unconscious. Perhaps one doesn't grow up either, since the unfolding story reveals Ionesco still smarting, in a childlike way, at the miseries inflicted on him by his broken Franco-Romanian family and by life in general.

His father, a political time-server, deserted his mother to marry a well-connected but grasping harridan. He despised his son as a would-be artist, who had opted for bohemianism instead of a lucrative career. The son felt guilt at not providing properly for his mother and sister, and he had uneasy relationships with his grandparents and an uncle. He is now looking for all these dead members of his family in the purgatory of his dreams, in order, as it were, to catch up with lost time and to prove to them that, in spite of their forecasts, he has achieved success. He has become rich and famous . . . but what, after all, are wealth and fame? His work, in which he believed for a while, may be dust and ashes; he suspects that the younger generation know nothing of him except his name; what is the point of being a member of the French Academy, if he didn't, like Beckett, get the Nobel Prize? The resentments, disappointments and *taedium vitae* come tumbling out, honestly but with hardly any ironic distancing or universalizing humour. The only dramatic climax occurs towards the end when, in an embarrassingly vindictive scene, Jean's mother is allowed to take night-marish revenge on her erring husband and his second wife.

It must be said that all this is more like oneiric psychodrama than theatre proper. Ionesco is working off his pessimistic bile almost directly, without transmuting it into tragicomic art, as he once did. The characters he presents are all flat, shoddy, unloved and unlovable; they offer the poor actors to scope for subtlety, yet cannot be played simply for laughs, as if they were Absurdist marionettes. This play was surely a bad and dispiriting choice for a company of young performers. However, Mark Sproston, who shoulders the heavy burden of Jean, is to be congratulated on carrying it so sturdily, and without forfeiting the sympathy of the audience.

James (Bob Peck), alias Pinter (or Piglet), recognizes Penny (or Prudence) as Patch, a childhood sweetheart with whom he shared a brief piratical idyll during a summer holiday in Cornwall. Thereafter all their clandestine activities take on the hectic unreality of a Famous Five adventure. Pinter's pet language of Potterisms (Beatrice, not Dennis), which he shares with Butley, turns murder into make-believe and an academic contract into another nut for Nutkin. Yet throughout the film the clash of styles is so fierce that characters hardly seem sure what sort of story they are supposed to be in. Pinter's frenzied sprint in pursuit of Patch (who isn't Patch) through the streets of Oxford to the music of Schubert's "Trout", suggests less the intoxication of passion than an imitation of John Cleese in *Clockwise*. Miranda Richardson, whose portrayal of Patch holds the key to the play's many mysteries is forced into wide-eyed overacting to maintain the balance between whimsy and psychosis. The play's gruesome climax in which characters start appearing with scissors impaled in their necks like the latest punk accessories is such a sudden switch into a Hitchcock mood that music is used to signal the change.

Yet Christopher Morahan's stylish direction succeeds in creating an idiom of comic wonder which holds these disparate elements together. This is Pinter through the Looking Glass, a form of satiric fantasy in which the skirmishes of academic gossip are transformed into the mock-heros of childhood adventures. As Pinter crushes the frilly flowered cushion on to the face of his beloved Patch his action completes the savage delicacy of this nursery-tale.



# COMMENTARY

## Departing from Shakespeare

Emrys Jones

GIUSEPPE VERDI  
Otello  
Royal Opera House

Verdi's *Otello* is a hundred years old; and since it contains a wealth of his greatest music, the question always arises why it should succeed less well in the opera-house than it appears to do. It is, after all, or so we are told, closely based on a play often thought to be the most theatrically effective that Shakespeare ever wrote. Yet despite its magnificently crafted score, dense with brilliant inventions and haunting expressive effects, Verdi's opera is in my experience less dramatically engaging than one might have expected. This is borne out by the new centenary production. For even though the leading roles are taken by singers of great distinction who are already intimately familiar with them, many of the events on stage, especially during the first half, seem to glide past without involving one's feelings to any great degree. In some important ways, *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*, smaller works, make a deeper impact, are clearer and more coherent, are even (perhaps) ultimately more moving.

The reasons for this situation – if I am right in believing it to exist – can be found in Boito's libretto which, though very close to Shakespeare's play in some respects, is very remote from it in others. Music critics tend to stress the likenesses rather than the differences. In fact a reviewer of this same production clearly thinks that libretto and play are not just similar but more or less identical and that if you see the one you are inescapably also seeing the other: "Any performance of the opera has to be also a performance of the play behind the opera: there is hardly any other dramatic work in which the source material can be felt so close to the surface" (Paul Griffiths, in *The Times*). I would like to say that this is a rather different line. I would say that, in its powerfully efficient, pared-down, streamlined way, Boito's so-much-praised libretto (which is indeed admirable up to a point) plays havoc with Shakespeare's tragedy. There would of course be no objection to this if Boito had substituted an action which worked equally well as music-drama. But he has not. What we have is a large number of close paraphrases of Shakespeare's text but re-assembled in a different sequence, together with massive intrusions of alien, or non-Shakespearean, material from other traditions (eg, Iago's Credo or Desdemona's Ave Maria). Verdi's critics, even the best of them, seem often to assume that he catches the essentials of Shakespeare's

*Otello*. It needs to be said with a quiet but firm emphasis that he does no such thing – and could not, given the libretto that Boito supplied him with.

His libretto departs from Shakespeare in innumerable ways large and small which, in sum, profoundly affect its substance and meaning; but I will mention just one decisive factor making not only for difference but for a severe limitation in what was open to Verdi to do with his literary material. Boito's *Otello* has an altogether different scenic structure from *Otello*. Shakespeare's sequence of fifteen distinct scenes is reduced by Boito to four – and even if one grants that these four scenes are in reality four long acts which each contain several episodes, they remain only four dramatic occasions, four continuous musical sequences. Boito's reduction of Shakespeare's structure has all kinds of far-reaching dramatic consequences. One of them is that, from the audience-viewpoint, the action of Verdi's opera moves too quickly, too unimpededly, to its crisis. We advance not, as in Shakespeare, through a frustratingly slow, enormously protracted build-up, but through a rapid succession of (modified) set-pieces which seem to follow each other with, if anything, an excessive promptness. Things happen too soon for the story to be felt to be convincing. Before we know where we are, we are at the climactic revenge duet at the end of the second act and we are in some obscure sense not ready for it, not emotionally prepared. Shakespeare, on the other hand, adopts a policy of dramaturgical delay, of postponement, during the first two acts of his play (the first act of which, Boito, of course, dropped). In Shakespeare, by the time we reach the temptation in the ninth scene, we have been fully prepared and it can make its great effect. In Boito's quite dissimilar construct, the temptation takes place in the second act (ie, the second scene); moreover it follows closely upon the love-duet at the end of the first act and seems therefore to arrive all the more suddenly. This is one reason why we cannot respond as deeply to Verdi's rendering of the temptation-scene as, in musical terms, it deserves. For his part, Boito shows that, for all his close study of *Otello*, he did not understand the logic of Shakespeare's dramatic method.

The new production is chiefly remarkable for the marvellous account of the score which Carlos Kleiber draws from the orchestra. Kleiber's quest for a crystalline clarity of sound sets the tone for an evening that is intensely exciting but is aesthetically stimulating rather than emotionally upheaving. But in doing so he seems to agree with the account of the work I have just outlined: the music of this Verdian

music-drama is entralling; the drama – in performance – often fails to catch fire.

Certainly the stage pictures (by Timothy O'Brien) don't help things very much. Giant Corinthian columns are grouped on each side of the stage, leaving a vast and troubling gap in



Ira Aldridge as Othello, Frankfurt, 1852, from a lithograph by S. Buhler, Mannheim; reproduced from Shakespeare in Sable: A history of black Shakespearean actors by Erroll Hill. 216pp. University of Massachusetts Press, \$20. 0 87023 426 9).

the centre which for much of the first and third acts is filled with no more than an expanse of sky. The enormous columns, resting on bases four feet or so tall, serve merely to dwarf all the characters, including Othello. Such huge chunks of trivially noble neo-classical masonry project an atmosphere – heavy, inert – that has nothing to do with any discernible aspect of the tragedy: a lot of the action in the middle acts looks as if it were taking place in a prosperous bank. Even in Desdemona's bedchamber we catch sight of a ponderously bland Corinthian capital. Large painted backcloths are equally intrusive and irrelevantly grandiose: a Christ in Majesty in the first act, a Deposition in the third, a Virgin and Child in the fourth. Such images contribute to the effect of unthought-out inflation.

Elijah Moshinsky's production has good moments, though it is often no more than serviceable. It is strongest in the first act. In the opening storm the audience occupies the position of the sea, the Cypriots peering out at us for a glimpse of Othello's ship. For his first entry

Otello runs up a ramp as if from a boat and at once turns round, spottily, to deliver with full force his thrilling "Esultate!" Desdemona's first appearance, though silent, has a comparable quality of surprise. An unoccupied upstairs balcony has been visible throughout; late in the act, a tall watchtower-on-wheels is being pushed away and for a moment blots out the balcony. By the time the balcony re-emerges Desdemona is revealed to be on it – a simple visual contrivance but one giving a shock of mild surprise which suitably registers her entry into the action. She has materialized like a goddess: she has not visibly walked on; she is simply there. And this seeming-epiphany prepares perfectly for the lead-in to the love duet which follows. The scene earlier in which Cassio is made drunk by Iago has all the sinister glitter of a witches' sabbath, a disturbing fusion of the convivial and the menacing – a true "malign fiesta". Here the Cassio of Kim Begley, large, handsome, weak, is shown as he succumbs to the wine to be already a practised womanizer – his fondling of a compliant watch seeming to make up for Boito's exclusion from the stage of Shakespeare's Bianca. Such moments show the producer's unobtrusive skill. On the other hand, the stage-business with the handkerchief in the third act is tastelessly elaborated. One could have done without Iago's ritual of handkerchief waving, twirling and tossing, not to speak of his crowning gesture of spreading it out over his face. But on the whole the production observes restraint, taking its cue from Plácido Domingo's own abstinence from mere histrionics – no demoniacal laughter from Iago at the end of the Credo, no broken sobbings from Otello at the close.

Domingo's Otello is always intelligent and well judged, and there are some passages of ravishing singing. But one is conscious of restraint rather than power. His finest moments are those expressing abject misery, as in the third act monologue "Diol mi potevi scagliar tutti i mali" ("Had it pleased heaven / To try me with affliction"), when he sinks down to a crouching position as if physically crushed with grief. But otherwise his Otello lacks a necessary dangerousness: he is scarcely ever genuinely formidable – he seems too gentle, even too nice a man. Justino Diaz gives a finely poised and essentially unselfish performance, the high point coming, as perhaps with most operatic lags, not with his slightly embarrassing Credo but with "Era la notte". Kaila Ricciarelli's Desdemona looks beautiful and sings with a quiet purity, if at times a trifle wanly; but one is aware of a slight faintness of stage-personality, which again contributes to the uncertain impact of the dramatic side of Verdi's opera. All in all, a wonderful night for the orchestra.

and warmed by the romantic colours of Howard Hodgkin's dresses and back-cloths, the dancing includes enough expressive mime to arouse the sympathetic amusement of the audience.

The grace of the young dancers cannot, however, disguise the weakening of choreographic invention towards the end. Though Ballet Rambert must have appreciated the opera company's orchestral as well as vocal support, it must be said the musicians played better for *Oedipus*. In *Pulcinella*, the exceptional sharpness and clarity of Stravinsky's orchestral texture means that a blotted note from woodwind or brass speaks loudly indeed.

The 2nd Newcastle-upon-Tyne Electric Music Festival will take place at the Newcastle Playhouse from May 6 to 9. Works by Steve Reich, Jonathan Harvey, Peter Maxwell Davies and Alfred Schnittke will be performed and the finals of the first international performance competition will be judged. Further information is available from Roger Wollen, 38 Woodbine Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 1DD.

In his review of the film *Salvador*, last week, Christopher Hitchens did not originally mention the name of the director, Oliver Stone. He inserted it ourselves as we went to press, but by an all-too-avoidable association it turned into Oliver North. We apologize.

## The grand allusion

Alastair Fowler

CHARLES MARTINDALE  
John Milton and the Transformation of Ancient Epic  
239pp. Croom Helm, £22.50.  
0 299 3520 X  
JOHN M. STEADMAN  
The Wall of Paradise: Essays on Milton's poetics  
156pp. Louisiana University Press, £20.  
0 8071 1230 5  
JOHN KEVIN NEWMAN  
The Classical Epic Tradition  
566pp. University of Wisconsin Press, £30.  
0 299 10510 5

The transformation of epic is a paradigmatic, heavily theorized instance of imitation at a historical distance. Its transmission of meaning is anything but casual: a testing ground, in fact, for ideas about etiological restoration. It is interesting, therefore, that all three books under review register a reaction against extending literary works by intertextual free-play.

This is particularly striking in Charles Martindale's handling of allusion. On *Paradise Lost* 1.84 ("If you beest he; but O how fallen how changed"), Francis Blessington in (*Paradise Lost and the Classical Epic*, 1978) is sure that "the whole situation of Troy burning and Aeneas hastening into exile should be recalled . . . to follow [parallels to the major classical epics] out is almost never an unprofitable exercise". By comparison, Charles Martindale takes a restrictive view. He knows that Isaiah 14 demythologizing Satan's glamour is more germane. Blessington's method "is dangerously open-ended, lacking sufficient checks to subjectivity; as one context is played, with ever increasing ingenuity, against another, almost anything may . . . result".

Elsewhere, Martindale distinguishes crisply between topos and allusion, allusion and parallel. He reminds us that Renaissance methods of composition encouraged purely local imitation; so that allusion need not imply broader contexts. Anyone familiar with tomes like the *Polyanthes* will see the force of this. Still, distinguishing allusion from topos may not in practice be possible. Besides, topos should not be hypostatized: since they are learnt stereotypes, their presence implies knowledge, not some pretextual stage, of specific exemplars. To declare this intertextuality irrelevant does not automatically make it so.

Most will now agree with Martindale that continual appeal to intertextuality is foolish. Nevertheless, one wishes that he had come to grips with the more discriminating account of imitation and intertextuality in Thomas Greene's *The Light in Troy* (reviewed in the *TLS*, March 4, 1983). Martindale's conception may be a little too lexical – as is common with classicists. In the Renaissance, ordinary readers did not have a very detailed familiarity with ancient texts; and Milton (although himself an extraordinary reader) would take that into account. This is not to say that Martindale reduces allusions to direct verbal correspondences. Indeed, his discussions of allusion are far more interesting than those of the apostles of free-play – as well as being more accurate than those of previous Miltonists. He is particularly good on dynamic series of allusions, and on the clusters of Ovidian allusions associated with Eve.

By comparison, John Kevin Newman is inclusive – capable, even, of expansive gestures to Milton's "vast web of allusion". Yet he deals with artistic decisions, not with indeterminately malleable "texts". When he writes that "Milton's genius has left these ambiguities in spite of its overt Christian commitment", he may cling to notions of polyvalence, but he is nevertheless ready to discuss intentional deployment of epic conventions.

We speak of "the epic tradition". But the tradition Newman has in mind is not the familiar one beginning with Homer and passing, through Virgil, directly to Milton. While not ignoring this filiation, Newman mainly wishes to promote an alternative Alexandrian tradition running from Callimachus through Apollonius Rhodius his pupil, and influencing Virgil, Ovid, Statius and Chaucer. Callimachus, to Martindale merely "one of [Virgil's] favourite

poets", is to Newman the hero who found a north-west passage, a way to circumvent the unanswerable Homer, a gap through narrative discontinuity and lyric condensation and narratorial intervention.

Since the discovery in this century of fragments of Callimachus' lost works, appreciation of the Alexandrian tradition has grown. Newman feels able to argue not only for modern Hellenistic elements in Virgil and Ovid, but for their influence on Chaucer, Milton and modern literature at large. His magpie procedure and casual reordering of the traditional canon will have some readers loading their own with birdshot. The late Renaissance undoubtedly had a taste for Hellenistic poets, for example Musaeus and Nonnus. And perhaps a perennial alternative really can be traced, of historical versus romantic epic, long versus short, "continuous" versus selective. But Newman's talk of a coherent "Alexandrian code" tends to wander into unargued speculation. However interesting it may be, his argument extends itself too loosely. And at times it is ludicrously monocultural – as when Milton's phrase "Easie my unpmeditated Verse" is said to signify "an ominous abandonment of Callimachean insights" about the need for art.

This is not to deny that a Callimachean tradition could be constructed. A line of Alexandrian lyricized narrative might be traced, from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and the Elizabethan mythological epyllion, through Chapman and Drayton, to Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* (which not only avoids statement, interposes an ironic mask, and practises rigorous selection of an angled narrative, but has a denouement based ultimately on Callimachus' *Victoria Berenices*). Unfortunately Newman has neither the interest nor the knowledge for literary history of that sort. He is even unaware, apparently, that Hellenistic imitation in English has already been charted by Gordon Braden, in *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry* (1978). Instead, Newman turns to Eisenstein and Pudovkin, Tolstoy and Thomas Mann: to writers and directors who knew nothing of Callimachus, of course, but "found themselves forced by the Alexandrian spirit of our time into his attitudes". It is perfectly reasonable to see epic traditions as continuing in the work of Eisenstein, who drew many ideas from *Paradise Lost*. But simply to identify montage with Callimachean selectivity is to relax the cinctures of argument unacceptably.

Newman seems unaware how much criticism of the post-classical works he discusses has appeared during the past few decades. He even presents his discussion of Miltonic numerology as a discovery. He lacks, at times, a sense of what interests modern critics. Yet at other times he shows himself an excellent reader and an engaging writer. If his Callimachean tradition is a bit ramshackle, it will doubtless be rebuilt by others. Meanwhile, those who like speculative odysseys could do worse than submit to *The Classical Epic Tradition*. This Polyphemus of a book will hold them spell-bound; and in its cave they will see strange shadows.

Whereas Newman sits light to early literary theory, and to authors' descriptions of their own works, Renaissance poetics, by contrast, is the subject of *The Wall of Paradise*. Those familiar with John Steadman's writing will expect a learned contribution rationally supported, informed by a sense of issues beneath issues. But this is perhaps his most carefully argued study yet: a rigorous instance of the method of constructing limited inferences about authorial intention. Before even attempting to reconstruct Milton's poetic, Steadman surveys the evidential texts minutely, weighing scruples as to whether and how far this local context or that instrumental purpose needs to be discounted in drawing inferences as to their author's settled views. His scrupulous hermeneutic never minimizes the historical barrier – wall of paradise? – sundering us from Renaissance minds. Yet he can negotiate it at least to the extent of specifying features peculiar to Milton's poetic: his indecorous choice of a tragic subject; his readiness to appeal beyond classical rules to Scriptural precedent; his Protestant rethinking of heroic virtues; his preference for an argument "more heroic" than war ("hitherto the only 'Argument' / Heroic deem'd" – a claim broadly true, Steadman con-

siders, although Newman calls it "poor literary history"). Steadman has many interesting things to say about Milton's difficulties in deciding which epic brief to accept – and about the change of view that eventually led him away from the Italian romantic model.

On the advantages of the subject eventually chosen, Steadman is at his most incisive: "Milton follows and undermines the classical hero in Satan, just as he follows and undermines the romantic hero in Adam. . . . Or, on *Paradise Lost* as a siege epic: 'The analogy [of paradise to Troy] is further strengthened by the parallel between Achilles' pursuit of his foe thrice about Troy's walls and Satan's circling the globe in pursuit of his prey.' But the insights are thrown away with an effortlessness which, while attractive, nevertheless militates a little against their firm establishment. They needed more expansiveness, more persuasive detail. Elsewhere the method is a shade too compressed. Occasionally, even necessary explanations are omitted: not every reader will recall Chrysippus and Crantor. Compression even affects the documentation; quotations being treated summarily in batches.

Milton's choice of spiritual combat as an argument allowed him to imitate temptation literally, unlike the romantic epicists – although in a long footnote Steadman recognizes the presence in *Paradise Lost* of substantial elements of allegory. Martindale dwells on the poem's literalism more insistently, determined to find no allegory whatsoever, apart

## Foam on the wave

David Nokes

MATTHEW H. WIKANDER  
The Play of Truth and State: Historical drama from Shakespeare to Brecht  
304pp. Johns Hopkins University Press.  
£20.35.  
0 8018 2979 8

It is hard to believe that Nahum Tate seriously expected to fool the authorities when, in 1680, he gave his revised version of *Richard II* a new mafioso title, *The Sicilian Usurper*. During the Exclusion Crisis, as Walter Scott remarked, "the stage absolutely foamed with politics" and Tate did all he could to defuse Shakespeare's controversial treatment of usurpation by turning Richard into "a prudent prince, preferring the good of his subjects to his own private pleasures". Where Shakespeare (and the chronicles) show Richard seizing Gaunt's lands and plate, Tate's Richard politely requests an overdraft: "And shortly will with interest restore / The loan our sudden straights make necessary". That promise of interest payments is an indication of a new Whiggish world in which the bank rate rather than providence supplies the hedge to kingship.

History as politics features briefly in Matthew Wikander's synoptic survey of historical drama from Shakespeare (history as providence) to Brecht (history as alienation). In his chapter on "The Restoration and After" Wikander offers brief observations on the history plays of Lee, Banks and Rowe, together with some summary remarks on adaptations of Shakespeare's histories. Yet, while he indicates the role of historical parallelism in the political iconography of the period, he shows little familiarity with recent scholarship in this area, and his remarks elevate received critical opinions to the status of general truths. Unfortunately, this is a tendency which can be found throughout this book. Wikander has a fondness for headlining a series of key-note quotations which are used to encapsulate both an author and a period. Strindberg, in an essay written in 1903, described history as a "colossal game of chess with a solitary player moving both white and black". This image becomes the emblem for a form of drama in which history unfolds a mystic truth. Büchner confessed in a letter to his fiancée that he felt himself "crushed by the horrible fatalism of history", a phrase which is taken to identify his style of historical drama. Brecht wrote that "Alienation thus means historicization" and this phrase too provides a convenient pigeon-hole for his dramatic techniques. Wikander's theme

stresses the significance of echoes, influences and developments between one period and another, yet his critical analyses themselves are quite self-contained. The section on *Danton's Death* is typical. It begins with Büchner's letter, written in 1834 after he had studied the history of the French Revolution. In it he describes the role of the individual in history as "mere foam on the wave", and Wikander reminds us how the image recurs throughout the play. St Just celebrates the revolution as a destructive elemental force: "Is it so astounding that the great flood of revolution tosses up its dead at every bend and turn?" The whole Marion's sexuality is "like the sea that swallows down everything and sinks deeper and deeper". Danton has nightmare memories of the September massacres when "the globe of the world writhed under me". Wikander's argument is clear and unexceptionable, and would serve as an adequate introduction to the play. But there is nothing here to surprise the scholar or suggest a new perspective.

The most interesting section of the book is Wikander's opening analysis of the "Welsh scene" (III i) in *Henry IV*. Skillfully interpreting the significance of Wales, the motif of the division of the kingdom, the language of prophecy and incantation, and the rivalry of true and false princes, he presents the scene as the "iconic center" of the play. Elsewhere his comments on Shakespeare's histories are disappointingly conventional. There are acknowledged debts to Anne Barton and Emrys Jones, and a degree of deference towards Tillyard's "world picture" which some will find disturbing. Wikander's conclusion that "moral complexity is the hallmark of Shakespeare's mature dramatic style", while no doubt true, would carry more conviction in a formulation less reminiscent of untold student essays. Equally predictable is his description of that moral complexity as a blend of providentialism and Machiavelli. This neat pairing at the start of the book is deliberately echoed at the end, where he describes Brecht's history plays as a blend of humanism and Marx. Throughout the book Wikander shows a preference for apophorisms over analysis, and his text abounds with the kind of tendentious critical generalizations which seem deliberately designed to grace examination papers, followed by "Discuss". Examples are: "For Rowe, all politics reduces to sexual politics"; "without God, Strindberg reminds us, history is worthless"; "Brecht rewrites the history of science in order to make us rethink its future".

Confident, eloquent and well presented, Wikander's book is an unassuming guide and will please those who like their literary history presented in bold strokes.

## The theatre of frozen time

Arthur Jacobs

IGOR STRAVINSKY  
Oedipus Rex and Pulcinella  
Grand Theatre, Leeds

The feast of Stravinsky which is promised from the London Symphony Orchestra and others at the Barbican over the next few weeks will necessarily omit the theatrical dimension. An excellent reminder of that preoccupation of Stravinsky's has been on show in Leeds: a double bill divided, most unusually, between opera and ballet. It is sad that financial stringency has prevented its planned tour to other cities.

The presentation comes from Opera North and the orchestra is under the baton of its artistic director, David Lloyd-Jones. Its production of *Oedipus Rex* revived from the 1984 season, is joined by Ballet Rambert's new version of *Pulcinella*. The combination is appropriate, not only because the ballet required three singers which the opera company supplies, but because these two works (the ballet from 1919-20; the opera from 1926-7) show the richness, diversity and above all the self-sufficiency of Stravinsky's so-called neo-classical period.

Contemporary evidence, including Diaghilev's witness, shows how odd the impulse to

create such works must have seemed. An opera in Latin – even something called an "opera-oratorio", denying movement to the characters? A ballet score which pillaged Pergolesi and sprinkled piquant twentieth-century sauce on eighteenth-century harmonies? (The fact that the "Pergolesi" originals are now chiefly ascribed to other eighteenth-century composers does not affect the case.) Such procedures could too easily be seen as self-inflicted clamps on imagination.

Today the view is different. The use of pre-existent material, whether as springboard or as providing a rich vein of allusion, has attracted later composers as diverse as Shostakovich and Berio. Our opera-houses, able to receive Harrison Birtwistle and Philip Glass, accept the theatre of frozen time. *Pulcinella* now takes its place as a work of free and enjoyable fantasy: *Oedipus Rex* is more than that, nothing less than a masterpiece. It could hardly be better staged than, at Leeds, where an entrapped humanity is represented by a depersonalized chorus in Stefanos Lazaridis's set of layered boxes.

We are permitted sight of Oedipus' face, but the other characters are masked, and plunged in costumes which owe much to African fetishism, nothing to classical Greek symbols. The limitations on gesture and movement do not follow literally the injunctions on the published score, nor does the migration stick to

Cocteau's original. (The omission of the final "Oedipus, we loved you" is perhaps a pity.) But the essence of the drama is powerfully present; with major contributions from the male chorus and from the lighting by David Cunningham, Lazaridis and Michael Hunt are joint stage directors.

Anthony Roden sustains most of Oedipus' role strongly and affectingly, but the climax eludes him: no vocal or bodily expression conveys the self-realization of guilt ("Lux facta est"). Anne-Marie Owens, who has taken over some performances of Jocasta from Della Jones, sings with impressive force. The bass roles of Creon and Tiresias need stronger low notes. The narrator's part, which in other productions has often seemed awkward, is spoken by Robert O'Mahoney with just the right range of inflection.

As with the production of *Oedipus*, so with Richard Alston's choreography of *Pulcinella*: homage rather than fidelity to the Massine original has evidently been the guideline. Some *commedia dell'arte* details are removed, reasonably enough. The flirtatious Pulcinella remains; punished by his rivals, and playing his own tricks through substitutes dressed to look like him. Pimpinella, his wife and not his mistress in this new version, is vivaciously danced by Catherine Price in a style which happily contrasts with the effortless seductiveness of Pulcinella himself (Ben Craft). Prettily dressed,

John Kevin Newman



## Turning-points in consciousness

C. H. Sisson

STEPHEN PRICKETT  
*Words and "The Word": Language, poetics and biblical interpretation*  
305pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.  
0 521 32248 0

Stephen Prickett starts his *Words and "The Word"* with an illuminating analysis of the passage in 1 Kings 19 which tells the story of Elijah's meeting with God on Mount Horeb. He illustrates from several versions how "the modern English translations . . . seem to be quite unanimous in rejecting any ambiguity or oddity in the original". Kenneth Grayson, one of the translators of the *New English Bible*, is quoted as boasting that, "in equivocal passages, the translators had to come off the fence and say 'we think it means this.' In ambiguous passages they had to write out the meaning plainly, and in obscure passages, to refrain from reproducing nonsense in translation." So the *literal* sense of the Bible has been swept away by those whose declared intention was to make all clear, as they have done, though the "all" is not what the Bible says but all that is judged, in Prickett's phrase, "culturally

acceptable to modern sensibilities". The tension between the relatively remote text and contemporary speech has gone; the possibility of extracting from the original anything which has the air of novelty to current ignorance is precluded. One might as well read *The Times* as the Bible in such a version, and it is of course not only in relation to biblical translation that such considerations have force.

"The concept of 'religious language' is", as Prickett says, "a significantly recent one", and its emergence has something to do with the decay of religion as a social phenomenon. The concept of poetic language is less recent, but hardly less suspect, for it too suggests a design to impress people rather than to say something. Prickett examines the history of these conceptions from 1704, when John Dennis — one of Swift's "most profound Critics" — concluded that "Poetry is the natural Language of Religion", to the Romantics and beyond, passing by way of Lowth, Vico and Herder to Heidegger, Saussure and Ricoeur. It is an immensely well-informed survey, the usefulness of which is by no means confined to the elucidation of the "structure and mode of expression" of the Bible which is the main purpose of the book. How far it enables us, as the author claims, "to see poetry in a different light", is

another matter, for the theory of poetry has only tenuous connections with the practice of the art. Indeed one can sympathize with Terry Eagleton's contention that "there is no such thing as literary theory", however little one may sympathize with his attempt to put other, no less questionable disciplines in its place.

Certainly one can read poems, plays, novels, memoirs and recognize what lives on the page without being unduly troubled by hermeneutics, just as one can manage to live one's life away from books without more than passing anxieties on the same score. Perhaps a similar measure of active participation, and a similar indifference to the prevailing winds of theory and opinion, is required from readers of the Bible; this indeed appears ultimately to be Prickett's view. Reverting to the story of Elijah on Horeb, he concludes: "Our problem is not so much that the original event is inaccessible to us (as it is) but that, in another sense, it is apparently accessible in too many ways." If this does not dispose of the fundamental questions as to what we should take the Bible to mean, it at least makes for a certain diminution of arrogance, in more than one quarter.

Prickett devotes some space to an examination of passages in the *Purgatorio* relating to Dante's meeting with Beatrice, and the

appearance of the griffin. I am not sure how far this part of the book, which concludes with some reference to Blake, adds greatly to the general illumination of the thesis it illustrates. "The hearing of the Word, the encounter with the fiery chariot, the meeting with Beatrice, the experience of the prophetic nature of poetry (my italics) are profoundly disturbing, unsettling, and even destructive. They constitute a turning-point in consciousness." But do we learn anything about the nature of poetry from these illustrations? Does the "turning-point of consciousness" not relate rather to a certain subject-matter, treated with great accomplishment by a particular poet? Certainly the ambivalent sense of some of Dante's images has its parallels in poetry of a different kind, but one may still ask whether any attempt to give more than a technical meaning to the expression "poetry" is not a route to confusion. Prickett has, however, raised questions which ought to — but most probably will not — be taken to heart by those who are diffusing inferior versions of the Bible, to say nothing of the Alternative Service Book and the vernacular Roman mass. Yet it is doubtful whether my argument, however ingenious, will do anything to repair the evils brought about by the illiteracy of the clergy.

## Maintaining discipline

Cairns Craig

CHRISTOPHER NORRIS  
*Context of Faculties: Philosophy and theory after deconstruction*  
247pp. Methuen. £16 (paperback, £6.95).  
0 016 39930 4

At base, deconstruction is the belated acceptance into criticism of those dilemmas about language and rationality on which the whole panoply of early twentieth-century literary experiment was founded. The vertiginous collapse of traditional world-views in modernist literature was bounded and contained by a criticism which brought a logic (often borrowed from linguistics or history or sociology) into play to defuse the irrationalism with which the literature threatened us.

What deconstruction did was to turn the literary shock tactics of the early century back upon all those other disciplines to reveal that they could not be the foundation for rational critical debate since they were themselves nothing but literature. Some forms of deconstruction revel in this liberation from traditional form; others — in Christopher Norris's description of Paul de Man's writings — are a rigorous pressing against the limits at which "reason itself becomes enmeshed in 'undecidable' contexts of argument beyond its power to comprehend or control". Both, however, dissolve the very ground of intellectual debate, and that, philosophically, is their weakness as well as their strength, since they cannot help but use, in making their own case, the very elements whose frailty they have exposed in others' writings: if all language is deceptive, knowing it does not allow you to speak without deception.

*Context of Faculties* is focused on the consequences of this dilemma: Norris's closely worked chapters explore possible alternatives in contemporary philosophy. The book challenges philosophers with the need to come to terms with deconstruction, while trying to isolate the bases by which the deconstructive method can be prevented from collapsing into nihilism on the one side or idealism on the other. The book ranges over narrative theory, rhetoric, politics and aesthetics, and in its ability to move with ease between these various disciplines, and between philosophical positions which cross the boundaries of the Anglo-American and Continental traditions, it is symptomatic of a new level of sophistication in critical theory in Britain: unlike many of our so-called theorists, Norris has no need to parcel his philosophical fragments not to retreat into common sense either.

At the heart of the book, however, is Norris's confrontation with what he sees as the effort to turn the epistemological thrust of deconstruction into a foundation for intellectual and cultural relativism. The main antagonist

here is Richard Rorty, both for his belief that literary criticism has only moved into "theory" because philosophy has ceased to accept the grounds on which it is based, and for his insistence that knowledge is a pragmatic adjustment between various cultural needs and interests at any particular point in time. Rorty's view that an argument is valid only within the culture which holds it justified is, for Norris, not the end-point of deconstruction but a falsification of the rationalist rigour with which deconstruction proceeds, even if it is unable to provide epistemological or ontological grounds for its refusal to "abandon the protocols of reasoned argument".

What Norris wants to do is to retain deconstruction's radical critique of the philosophical tradition, but to use it to provide a better basis for a defence of reason as the arbiter of philosophical, aesthetic and political matters. Against Rorty and those who would "go relativist", he invokes elements of contemporary analytic philosophy — and particularly the work of Donald Davidson — in order to establish the possibility not just of cultural norms for the operation of language, but "logical constants" which can be the foundation of rational argument and decision-making.

The weakness in Norris's case, I think, that he identifies relativism too easily with American pragmatism, and relies too heavily on the fact that Rorty's pragmatism "goes along with an express commitment to the ethos and values of present-day American society". It is undoubtedly true that such a pragmatism, in an American context, makes inevitable the dominant position of its own cultural value system. But that does not falsify it. It only means that we are not happy with the subordination which it implies for the rest of us. Norris does not take seriously enough the decentering thrust of a thinker like Jean-François Lyotard, whose acceptance of relativism challenges such cultural domination rather than enforces it. In Rorty's case, relativism may mean support for the bourgeois-liberal status quo, but, equally, deconstruction in the hands of some of its practitioners can imply a sceptical refusal of all modes of commitment; thus allowing radical thought to be balanced with cultural and political passivism.

But Norris's willingness to explore the consequences of deconstruction not just for literary theory, but in relation to the philosophical issues on which theory has, in the end, to base itself, is a significant contribution towards deconstructing the boundaries which have allowed philosophers and literary critics in this country to side-step the implications of each other's work. It is a tentative book, but the modesty with which it offers its conclusions does not modify the rigour of its thought or conceal the seriousness of the challenges it poses.

## Significant female

Ian Maclean

NAOMI SEGAL  
*The Unintended Reader: Feminism and Manon Lescaut*  
324pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.  
0 521 30723 6

Naomi Segal's "unintended reader" is the female reader of Prévost's novel, who is "positively" excluded from the text in that it purports to be a story told by one man to another. Such positive exclusion can be turned to good use, however, for it allows women to read *Manon Lescaut* in a deconstructive way, whereas men cannot escape the mechanisms of this "gendered" text.

Dr Segal's analysis rests on a number of hypotheses; the most important is that the confessional *récit*, of which *Manon Lescaut* is an early example, is "the most sophisticated and high-class version of smut" — smut being, according to Freud, an exchange between men, often, although not necessarily, in the company of women, which excludes and vilifies them. A second hypothesis concerns the nature of male desire in narrative, which is said to be motivated by uncertainty about the self and curiosity about the nature of female sexual pleasure. *Manon Lescaut* is taken by Segal to be the product of des Grieux the narrator and not of the imagination of Prévost the author; the language of the text becomes thereby the surface below which lurk the anxieties and desires of its producer.

Her study falls into three parts: the first part is a close reading of the text, the second an examination of the major themes of money, women, character doubling and fatality, and the third a feminist reassessment of psychoanalysis, in which the traditional version of the Oedipus complex is inverted to produce a male womb-envy and envy of female sexual pleasure. *Manon Lescaut* is the text chosen to press the claims of this theory. To des Grieux is attributed an unconscious desire for Manon's death as a solution to his own male inadequacy; his narrative is an "essential way of getting rid of her", the "utterance of a narrator who is asking for an end to desire by speaking about desire". Where the line is drawn between conscious and unconscious desire, and conscious and unconscious role-playing, is not always clear; but this does not seem crucial to such a reading, which takes the text to be a totality expressing the psychology of des Grieux. Even other characters are said, by the process of doubling, to constitute a "dissemination of the self in fiction" by the narrator; the doubles examined here are brothers, fathers, and most importantly des Grieux's spitting with Manon, who as creative artist and mother becomes the embodiment of his sexuality (his

phallus), whom he must kill because she subverts the male art of the dirty joke and undermines the patriarchal order. Manon's acceptance of the split between surface and depth, language and desire, contrasts with des Grieux's naive belief that the linguistic sign "belongs to a collusion of men which solves and closes oedipal desire". Manon threatens him by her creativity, her maternity and her denial of his desire through the otherness of her own; in a Lacanian mode, Segal evokes the quasi-homonyms "Mama", "Maman" and "Maison" to suggest this threat. Her reading fruitfully exposes the metaphorical substructure of the text in which the semantic fields of money, desire, exchange, power and sex interpenetrate and intersect around the "sexual signifier of the female". Her analysis of the death scene in which des Grieux "ingests" Manon's creativity, and her demonstration that he is both the master and dupe of the language he deploys, are subtle and convincing. Scenes involving deception, passion and madness are closely read, with interesting results.

But such an approach also has its weaknesses. Segal characterizes the wider purpose of the narrative as the suppression of the autonomy of women, but at the same time presumes that Manon's presence in the text in words, missives and actions is somehow authentically female. An essentialist account of the character of des Grieux as narrator is not easily reconciled with a psychoanalytical investigation of him as a locus of unavowed desires. Interesting narratological problems are overlooked; indeed, it seems to be a condition of a psychoanalytical reading that it excludes the study of determining factors other than unconscious desire. Some disregard of the historical context of the novel is another by-product; in this case, contemporary conventions of rhetoric and of the language of moral philosophy are not considered, and the historical readership of the novel is not accounted for. Whether excluded or not by the fictional context of a conversation between two men, women did in fact read the novel, presumably because as readers they could adopt any role that was required by the story.

But this question may be unimportant to Segal, whose reassessment of psychoanalysis comes to dominate the exercise in literary criticism appended to it. Such claims as "the primary qualities of the monotheistic God — creation and providence — are those which logically define the female body: womb and breasts" and "we can have free language; by becoming boys, or sexual ecstasy, by becoming girls" are explicitly polemical, and belong to a wider argument altogether than that surrounding the text of *Manon Lescaut*. In the same way as women are declared to be excluded by des Grieux's story, one may surmise that Dr Segal's explicit feminism will leave many male readers (out in the cold).

## Changeless preoccupations

David Parker

PIERRE GOUBERT  
*The French Peasantry in the Seventeenth Century*  
Translated by I. Patterson  
242pp. Cambridge University Press. £25 (paperback, £8.95).  
0 521 26007 8

Virtually the only misleading comment in this remarkable little book is Pierre Goubert's own description of it "as a series of pictures or snapshots . . .". Certainly a superficial perusal of the contents might leave that impression, particularly as the chapters are given deceptively simple headings: "Houses: outside and in", "Birth and survival", "The different types of peasant families", "The peasant and his parish priest", "The peasant and his seigneur", "The peasants and taxation" and so on. This approach, sustained throughout by a direct and unpretentious prose which makes the book accessible to the general reader, almost invites the specialist to dismiss it as a too descriptive social history useful merely as an introduction to more sophisticated treatments. Indeed Goubert makes it clear from the very first page that he does not in fact have much time for the activities of modern ethnologists and sociologists, as capable of expounding at length on "sign language, or traditions, sexuality, inversions and introversions, carnivals, witches and magicians . . . as they are incapable of telling wheat from barley".

Yet such first impressions belie the merits of this study, which has something to offer everyone no matter how familiar they might be with the central themes and material. In the first place it provides by far the most lucid summary of what is known about the environment and daily preoccupations of the peasantry, tempered by a constant awareness of the fact that the overwhelming majority never possessed very much and left little behind with which to reconstruct their world; Goubert's final chapter on Death and the Peasant, which in part is a rebuke directed at those who fail to recognize the acute limitations of the evidence, concludes with an emphatic reminder of the impenetrability of the peasants' deepest thoughts, in the face of which "the historian can only remain silent". It is this scepticism, harnessed to Goubert's formidable erudition, which enables him to distil from his own research and an extensive secondary literature the essential features of peasant life and its larger historical context.

Beginning with a useful aerial picture of the French countryside, Goubert then turns to the complexities of marriage patterns, of the rhythms of reproduction, of land tenure, all unfolded with striking simplicity yet without losing sight of the regional and local variations which make generalization so difficult. There follows a vivid description of peasant food and methods of work — the two inescapable daily preoccupations. Contrasting the occasional feast with the ever-present risk of hunger, and the constant need to supplement inadequate yields from family plots, perhaps by working for others, or by poaching for seigneurial rabbits and fish, he effectively conveys the permanent state of insecurity which dominated the lives of most Frenchmen. This is further illuminated by an exploration of the peasants' relationship to the relatively rich and powerful: large-scale farmers, money-lenders, seigneurs, the Church and the State itself.

Peasant dependence on the well-to-do for work, equipment, seed, or loans is a recurrent theme, while the practical consequences of seigneurial and ecclesiastical privilege are precisely delineated. We are reminded sharply of the pre-eminence of the seigneur within most communities, where he was usually the biggest landowner as well as the first inhabitant, a position reinforced and sustained by a variety of monopolies and by juridical recognition of his sole proprietorship of land, water and forest. While forms of communal self-government endured, and attempts to evade seigneurial obligations were a constant feature of the rural scene, and while resistance to the tax-collectors sometimes flared into open revolt, the peasantry became increasingly quiescent as the seventeenth century gave way to the eighteenth. Without making any attempt at a

systematic explanation of this tendency, Goubert notes the growth of the coercive powers of the State, the enlarged fiscal system and the somewhat delayed impact of the Counter-Reformation Church which "prepared the depths of France for order, discipline, perhaps for servitude and certainly for submission".

Yet if the forces which slowly began to modify the balance of forces in the French countryside are recognized, Goubert leaves an overall impression of enduring social structures, unchanging techniques of work, and a highly traditional economy. There are some fascinating illustrations of the limited use made of money in a society where even peasant debts were repaid with labour or in kind. We are also reminded of the continuing presence of ancient forms of family communities, which sociologists and legal historians have tended to treat as relics of a bygone age. If a steadily increasing number of peasants appeared to be on the verge of complete expropriation, the process did not reach its logical conclusion; if their ranks were periodically thinned by hunger, sickness, plague and war, their demographic resilience was sufficient to at least maintain the balance between life and death; the peasantry



A detail from Charles Le Brun's study for his painting, "The Different Nations of America", for the stairway of the Ambassadors at Versailles; it is taken from Louis XIV's Versailles by Guy Wilton (256pp, with 154 illustrations. Viking. £16.95. 0 670 80194 1).

managed to preserve their tenuous possession of the French soil. Such change as did occur emanated from outside, from the activities of Church and State.

Goubert's snapshots are thus multidimensional; and although there is an appearance of much description within a limited format, it is description designed to explore and explain a world of which the author's comprehension is unrivalled. His empathetic insight, balanced judgment and grasp of technicalities combine to produce a highly readable essay, offering the sort of rich and stimulating perspective which comes from a lifetime's reflection.

## Worldwide engagements

Anthony Mockler

TONY GERAGHTY  
*March or Die: France and the Foreign Legion*  
352pp. Grafton. £12.95.  
0 246 11975 6

A few years ago Tony Geraghty, formerly Defence Correspondent of *The Sunday Times*, wrote an excellent book about the SAS. It was original, invigorating and deservedly a popular success. Its successor, *March or Die*, is a worthy but, on the whole, tedious history of the French Foreign Legion.

From its foundation in 1831 till the present day there is no continent apart from Australia that the Foreign Legion has not fought in or roamed over; and Geraghty has loyally catalogued its every campaign. His major difficulty — and his SAS book had obviously not prepared him for this — is the vast amount of background material that is available. Faced with strings of disconnected military incidents, the author has had to provide a comprehensible background to, for example, the Carlist War in Spain in the late 1830s (or the French intervention in Russia in 1919, or the Kolwez paratroop drop in Zaire

## Infallibly quashed

John McManners

AUSTIN GOUGH  
*Paris and Rome: The Gallican Church and the Ultramontane campaign 1848-1853*  
267pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £27.50.  
0 19821977 6

Long ago, the Australian National Library at Canberra began the policy of purchasing collections of original materials on European history, with a natural bias towards the British domain, but with major forays into the French. When, two decades ago, such a purchase had to be justified, it was argued that the sheer intellectual content of modern French history makes it peculiarly relevant to Australian affairs — where else could one find the long-continuing debate about the role of the Roman Catholic Church in politics and education carried to such extremes of logic and invective?

It is into this field — the relations of the French Church with the State and with Rome — that Austin Gough, of the University of Adelaide, has ventured. A foreigner who writes French history — more especially from a

documentation in the Vatican, the archives of the archdiocese of Paris, the serried files of the Ministère des Cultes, the papers of Louis Veuillot and his outrageous newspaper *L'Univers*, those of half-a-dozen Catholic luminaries, lay and ecclesiastical, as well as the mountain of contemporary polemical literature. The research is exhaustive. The architecture of the writing belies the heavy solidity of the learned scaffolding — the argument and interpretation are shrewd and wide-ranging (offsetting the formal limitations of the chronology) and the prose is lucid and forceful, abounding in picturesque touches.

The first five chapters form a long introduction ranging over the first half of the nineteenth century. They describe how the lower clergy, drawn almost exclusively from the *classes laborieuses*, ill-educated, ill-paid, with very little standing in lay society and out of sympathy with their bishops, were ready to embrace Ultramontane doctrines, looking to Rome as against the lofty episcopal grandees, and to infallibility as their escape from the intellectual challenges that baffled them. The political, social and ecclesiastical roots of Gallicanism are traced, with its scholarly arguments to prove that infallibility must rest in the consensus of the whole Church, not in the Pope alone. By contrast, Ultramontanism, beginning as "a dissident movement among student intellectuals", became an overwhelming force, with Veuillot as its inspiration and mouthpiece. A fanatical believer, who hated Greek philosophy, the Enlightenment, science, railways, the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the Jews, and campaigned for the revival of the Inquisition and the establishment of a theocracy, he used his ironical pen and vituperative prose to flatten everyone who had doubts about papal absolutism. In the story of the years 1848-53, he is the dominant character.

The next eight chapters describe these fatal five years in which the Roman Index was used, arbitrarily and craftily, to sabotage Gallican scholarship, and the French dioceses were manoeuvred into the obligation to use the Roman Liturgy in place of their local rites. The encyclical *Incur Multiplicis* comes as the culminating point, the "strokes of an iron bell" tolling the knell of the doctrines of the conciliar nature of the Church and of the freedom of bishops to teach their own clergy. The struggle, which Gough likens to the doomed writings of the West European Communists to escape the dead hand of Moscow in the mid-twentieth century, is well described in his own words: "The heady moments of fellowship, the grappling of giant crustacean personalities, the cool betrayals of faithful acolytes and admirers, the stunning reversals of long-familiar policy, the appeals and petitions received only with calculated silence, the *démarches* which produced the opposite effect from the one intended."

His account, which in the final chapter carries on to the Vatican Council of 1870, is majestically impartial; even so, it is unfair to the Roman Church in the sense that the necessary limitation of theme misses out the piety, the spirituality, the selfless endeavours, the missionary work, the deep social concern which characterized an organization that was run from the top with the fumbling incompetence, seedy dishonesty and fanatical insensitivity which *Paris and Rome* so amply documents. What does it matter now, you may say, that truth was set at naught and so many disingenuous manoeuvres emerged triumphant? — ways have been found to redefine, qualify and explain, so that the intellectual scandal is buried, while the defeated need no lamentation since, after all, they yielded up their consciences for the sake of the unity of the Church. Practical men immersed in current ecumenical problems may say so, but not, I think, the historian. I am glad that in many a striking and ironical phrase Austin Gough has spoken for those who, in the last resort, dared not speak for themselves.

In *The French Exiled Clergy in the British Isles after 1789: An historical introduction and working list* (301pp. Downside Abbey, Stratton on the Fosse, Bath BA3 4RH. £14. 0 9502759 3 X). Dominic Aidan Bellenger describes the domination *religieuse* across the Channel occasioned by the French Revolution, with a biographical listing of nearly 7,000 émigré priests.



# Meeting the needs of the time

Roy Porter

PAUL U. UNSCHULD  
Medicine in China: A history of ideas  
423pp. University of California Press. £33.95.  
0520050231  
DAVID EISENBERG and THOMAS LEE WRIGHT  
Encounters with Qi: Exploring Chinese  
medicine  
254pp. Cape. £10.95.  
0224023659

Exoticism has long fulfilled two crucial, but utterly contrasting, roles within our society. By highlighting difference, it validates relativism, providing a cultural version of *cuius regio, eius religio*. Yet at the same time, it also holds out the possibility of something not just different but superior: the idea that maybe they order these things better in places strange and far away. The tensions between these quite distinct uses of the exotic resonate in these two profoundly contrasting accounts of Chinese medicine.

## At the post-mortem

J. F. Watkins

MICHAEL HOWELL and PETER FORD  
Medical Mysteries  
366pp. Viking. £10.95.  
0670802314

*Medical Mysteries* contains thirteen stories of "detective work in the medical field" (as the front cover describes the collection). From it we learn that the members of the absurdly incompetent French balloon expedition to the North Pole in 1897 died as a result of Trichinosis contracted from undercooked polar bear meat, that the dreadful sufferings of Douglas Mawson in the Antarctic in 1912 were due as much to excess Vitamin A from husky dog liver as to the cold and that Clare Bonth Luce suffered arsenical poisoning from Villa Taverna ceiling dust when she was Ambassador to Italy.

Each story begins with an account, in good, plain prose, of the appearance of unusual symptoms in individuals or communities, and goes on to explain the clever, painstaking, and sometimes heroic methods by which a cause was found. In some stories there are tantalizing hints of matters more generally interesting than the bare facts of the investigation. D. Carleton Gajdusek, for example, wrote "medical investigation . . . to me has always been non-competitive", and then proceeded, competitively and brilliantly, to solve the problem of the degenerative neurological disease of Kuru in New Guinea cannibals. The details of the work of the Yellow Fever Commission in Cuba in 1900 will excite only the medical historian; but the suicidal heroism of some investigators, and the human weakness and pettiness displayed by others in the rush to claim credit for a discovery are of wider interest, and should have been given greater emphasis. It was, after all, not the scientific detail which made James D. Watson's *The Double Helix* (1968) such an absorbing and successful book, but its novelistic treatment of the characters.

We are, though, given fourteen pages of bizarre sex. We have the Marquis de Sade and his valet involved in ludicrous and disgusting antics in a Paris brothel; their faith in the myth that cantaridin (Spanish Fly) is an aphrodisiac was shared. In 1954, by an office manager in Balham who killed two of his typists by administering this painfully lethal substance in coconut icing. This particular mystery, though, has nothing to do with medicine and everything to do with human stupidity. The same can be said

Among the topics discussed in *Science in the Early Roman Empire: Pliny the Elder, his sources and influences*, edited by Roger French and Frank Grønmo, is the "The Elder Pliny and his 'Mystery' by J. Reynolds". The Perils of Pliny: "Pharmacy in Pliny's Natural History" by J. Scarborough and "The Structure of Pliny the Elder's Natural History" by A. Leach.

Paul Unschuld's massive erudition lies at the service of relativism. His main aim is to explain the history of Chinese medical theories by locating them within successive broader paradigms of belief - demonological, Confucian, Taoist, Buddhist, Marxist - each of which he anchors in turn within the line of dynasties from the Shang and Chou empires up to the Gang of Four.

Not for Unschuld such Whiggish questions as whether the Chinese beat Harvey to the discovery of the circulation of the blood (he adduces extensive textual evidence for scepticism towards some of Joseph Needham's claims to Chinese priority in such matters). Indeed, Unschuld tends to regard Chinese and Western systems as essentially incommensurable, denying ready translatability. When Chinese medicine speaks of "kidneys", it would be a gross error for us to read the kidneys of *Gray's Anatomy* (or indeed of *Ulysses*). Moreover, Gray simply has no equivalent organ at all to the "Triple Burner" of Chinese analogical anatomy. Above all, in a sustained argument against Western "alternative medicine" ped-

of puerperal fever in the nineteenth century. What puzzles us now is the vicious bigotry of many in the medical establishment who rejected the obvious truths propounded by Semmelweis and Oliver Wendell Holmes, that doctors should wash their hands between dissection slab and labour ward.

Even greater obscurity surrounds the moral change which has left today's medical chiefs open-minded almost to a fault. These kinds of issue are not explored in this efficient, journalistic book. Balkan nephropathy, blinded premature babies, toxic jaundice in Epping, plague in twentieth-century Suffolk, and cholera in nineteenth-century London, are, or were, important medically; but on the whole one's response to the stories in this volume resembles one's response to the better kind of television documentary. Our interest is caught, we marvel; but we forget the whole thing as soon as the programme is over.

## The inventors of hospitals

Michael Angold

JOHN SCARBOROUGH (Editor)  
Symposium on Byzantine Medicine  
282pp. Dumbarton Oaks Publishing, 4866  
Hampton Station, Baltimore, MD 21211. \$40.  
0884021394

This volume of Dumbarton Oaks Papers, No 38, is dedicated to Owele Temkin, who has done so much to rescue Byzantine medicine from the contempt in which it was held. His watchwords, "tradition" and "empiricism", provide the theme. Vivian Nutton sets the scene by emphasizing the practical quality of the medical handbooks produced in late antiquity. The aim of a Paul of Aegina was to make Galen's achievements accessible, though he could scarcely have anticipated the praise of his translator, Francis Adams, a mid-nineteenth-century doctor who found Paul's handbook of real value in his Highland practice. Paul's slightly older contemporary, Alexander of Tralles, brother of the famous Anthemius, architect of Santa Sophia at Constantinople, made use of his own case-studies to illustrate the practical application of Galen's teachings. His bedside manner was clearly impeccable. He was happy to oblige his rich patients and advocated the use of charms and amulets, aware of their value as a placebo. This is just one example of something that several contributors to the *Symposium on Byzantine Medicine* stress: that there was no direct conflict between medical science, on the one hand, and Christian piety, even rank superstition, on the other. They were seen as complementary. Some areas, women's diseases, for instance, were better left to a faith-healer, such as St Simeon the Younger (died 592).

Clay tokens from that saint's shrine near Antioch are the starting-point for Gary

dlers, who think they can simply appropriate those chunks of Chinese healing which seem to work or have a moral appeal. Unschuld castigates the indiscriminate translation of the basic concept *ch'i* (which fundamentally means "wind") into the Western vulgarization, "vital energy".

For Unschuld, the significant history of Chinese medicine is not the scientific balance-sheet of what worked and what did not, but the meaning of the theories. Thus in a significantly different account of the emergence of acupuncture from that offered by Lu Gwei-djen and Needham, Unschuld principally emphasizes its rationales within Chinese (symbolic) anatomy. Moreover, by arguing for acupuncture's relatively late appearance, he further denies any quintessential overarching (ethnic) "unity" to his subject.

Put another way, in Unschuld's view, medical theories gained their purchase, not because they worked therapeutically, but because they worked socio-ecologically: they squared with the cultural needs of their time. The highly traditionalist Shang age saw sickness and recovery in terms of ancestral causes and placation. The bloody Chou period in turn produced a medicine typified by ideas of demonological invasion. With the "unification of the empire" came the symbolic unification of thought about health in the "medicine of systematic correspondence" - the notion of bodily health as balance, incorporating the ideas of *yinyang* and the "Five Phases", all of which were to prove as central to Chinese medicine as humoral theory in the West.

Unschuld's method - itself the application of a form of "systematic correspondence" - will provoke controversy. What is undeniably valuable, however, is his emphasis on how each new wave of Chinese medical theory ended up by complementing the preceding corpus of ideas, rather than supplanting it in the way we expect in the Western scientific tradition. Even today, traditional and Western medicine co-exist side-by-side in China, on a basis of rough parity, in a way it is hard to imagine the imperatives of science could tolerate in the West. In fact, to speak of Chinese medicine is itself a misnomer. There have been, and still are, many different Chinese medicines (Unschuld

lists seven major "health care systems"). Indeed, with imperial decay from the sixteenth century, medical systems proliferated, and the resultant chaos devitalized the tradition, affording missionary-introduced Western medicine a relatively easy passage. Importantly, however, indigenous medicine survived, and still thrives. China now has some third of a million traditional doctors, alongside over half a million trained in Western medicine. Globally, such coexistence is comparatively rare: typically, in its imperialist way, Western medicine has beaten traditional varieties to the margins and down the social scale.

In a book guilty of all the solecisms Unschuld warns us against, but which remains eye-opening and valuable none the less, the American physician David Eisenberg looks forward to the day when East and West can meet. On the basis of personal experience gained in early medical training in China and on subsequent visits, Eisenberg argues that traditional Chinese therapeutics are frequently impressively effective. Acupuncture, massage, certain herbal preparations and, above all, the techniques of *ch'i gong*, with its use of breathing and concentration to direct *ch'i* to control matter and destroy pathogens - all these he has witnessed, and witnessed working. Chinese medicine has much to teach the West. But we have also much to offer in exchange, not least - how predictable from a New Yorker! - Western psychiatry ("A generation of psychologists and psychiatrists is desperately needed in China").

The great leap forward towards integration, as Eisenberg sees it, will come from proper clinical trials. But there's the rub. For the very notion of objective, universal, laboratory-based clinical trials is itself utterly foreign to Chinese medicine. It is significant that the Americans accompanying Eisenberg, on witnessing traditional Chinese cures, attributed them to placebo effects or subjective psychological causes, simply perpetuating a cognitive imperialism, and rendering all the more disturbing Eisenberg's call to improve China with psychiatrists. Unschuld's hermeneutics, analysing texts by their systematic coherence, and Eisenberg's positivism, are as distant as the East and the West they represent. They seem destined to remain poles apart.

counted both socially and intellectually. Kuzhdan's cautious approach is in contrast to T. S. Miller's exuberance. His talk of teaching hospitals with their "interns" and "out-patient units" grates, but he provides, if only in passing, the outlines of an answer to the problem of the transmission of medical knowledge and texts. The key is the creation of hospitals, which was a specifically Christian contribution to the care of the sick, going back to the work of Basil of Caesarea in the fourth century. They survived because increasingly they were attached to monasteries. Miller may exaggerate the standard of care on offer, but the hospitals preserved some knowledge of the old texts, to judge by the monk-physician Meletius' work *On the Constitution of Man*; but his main concerns were practical: his specialities were cauterization and blood-letting.

The standard of Byzantine medicine appears to have lagged behind that available in Islam, as M. Dols shows over the treatment of the insane: at least, until the late eleventh century, when direct contacts were established with Islamic practice. These best explain the high level of surgery and medical care to be had in the mid-twelfth century at the hospital of the Pantokrator at Constantinople. Thereafter Byzantine medicine was maintained at a high degree of practical skill. Byzantine doctors seem to have been adept at using urine and faeces as diagnostic tools, and their work was long appreciated in the West: two late Byzantine medical textbooks, translated into Latin, continued in use at the University of Padua until the seventeenth century.

The contributions collected here shed invigorating new light on the well-worn theme of Byzantium and the Classical Tradition. They demonstrate that Byzantium preserved much of the medical legacy of antiquity, not out of some antiquarian impulse, but because it had practical value.

# The Second World War sound

Brian Case

GEOFFREY BUTCHER  
Next to a Letter from Home: Major Glenn  
Miller's wartime band  
366pp. Edinburgh: Mainstream. £14.95.  
185180255

Geoffrey Butcher's chronicle of the thirteen-month stint in Britain by Major Glenn Miller's American Band of the Allied Expeditionary Force is not intended for the casual reader. Next to a *Letter from Home* is an extraordinarily diligent application of the Namier approach to history. Despite a multitude of eyewitness accounts of the band's activities, it is the emphasis on the detail of itineraries which gives the book its character. With its day-by-day account of broadcasts - live, pre-recorded, repeated or cancelled - and its meticulously logged personnel changes, it will become the standard work of reference on a narrow aspect of the Second World War. It comes as no surprise to learn that Mr Butcher was the co-founder of the Glenn Miller Society.

Miller was at the height of his popularity in the United States when patriotism induced him to join up. His dreams of modernizing military music ran into official opposition, and his published comment that "anybody can improve on Sousa" did little to endear him to army traditionalists. In 1944, he successfully persuaded the authorities to ship him and his forty-piece orchestra to England, from where he would be able to communicate "a hunk of home" to GIs nearer the combat zone. Eisenhower, through Winston Churchill, was able to put pressure on the BBC to accept the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (Shaeaf) entertainment programme for transmission, and the Glenn Miller orchestra broadcast almost daily for the next thirteen months. For British listeners it was a revelation: no American band had played on British soil for eleven years because of a ban by the Musicians Union, and recordings on wartime shellac were a poor substitute for the real thing. As *Melody Maker* said of the BBC debut, "Adolf, on behalf of swing fans, take a bow! You've violated a few treaties since the early Thirties, but you won't be razed for ripping this barrier aside."

Relations between Miller and the BBC were not good. The Corporation tried to insist that the music remained at a constant volume - this to a bandleader whose stock-in-trade was the diminuendo and crescendo of riffs! - to avoid complaints from listeners about reception. Major Miller felt that his main duty was to play at the American air bases, but the BBC believed that the broadcasts had prior claim. Butcher, clearly on Miller's side, complains about the pitifully few fragments of the ninety-eight broadcasts kept in the BBC archives.

## Murder on the mind

Brian Morton

WILLIAM J. HARRIS  
The Poetry and Poetics of Amiri Baraka: The  
jazz aesthetic  
163pp. University of Missouri Press. \$20.  
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The "jazz aesthetic", as William J. Harris defines it, involves three main devices: repetition, variation and inversion. These, he argues, are the foundations of Amiri Baraka's attempt to free himself from a "white" aesthetic and to create a genuine black poetics.

Amiri Baraka - or LeRoi Jones, as he was when he first began to write - initially drew more from the white modernist avant-garde than from black writers of the 1920s Harlem Renaissance, such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen or Jean Toomer. His first influences were Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and, crucially, Charles Olson. From these, as Professor Harris shows, he learnt a complex set of lessons which, for a time, overlaid the grounding in black arts that he had had from his tutors, Sterling Brown and Nathan Scott, at Howard University in the early 1950s.

The main problem with Miller for the reader is that the man was not particularly interesting. In the war years, an estimated one coin in three in the jukebox went towards the selection of "Moonlight Serenade", "In The Mood", "Tuxedo Junction" or "Chattanooga Choo-Choo", but the man who devised that distinctive four-saxophones-and-a-clarinet voicing remained as remote as his rimless glasses would suggest. Benny Goodman once commented that Miller possessed "a great sense of the commercial, of what would attract the average listener". The testimonies of former members of Miller's band are unanimous in finding its leader decent, reserved, meticulous in matters musical and a model of efficiency. Even the manner of his disappearance yields no melodrama. The Norseman in which he was flying across the Channel never arrived in France, and no



Tommy Potter, Charlie Parker and Max Roach at the Three Deuces, New York, in 1948. Parker's greatest performances took place between 1947 and his death eight years later. More than 350 Parker improvisations were privately recorded during these years. Together with posthumously discovered studio performances, they constitute an archive with few parallels in the history of jazz. The photograph is reproduced from *Celebrating Bird: The Triumph of Charlie Parker* by Gary Giddins (128pp. New York: Borch Tree Books, William Morrow. \$15.95. 0 688 05953 0), which will be published by Hodder and Stoughton in the autumn and subsequently reviewed in the TLS.

wreckage has been recovered. There are pages of informed speculation from Lieutenant-Colonel Frey of the USAF, concluding that the plane probably crashed into the sea as a result of fog and freezing weather. Rumours that Major Miller had been involved in black marketeering and was stabbed in Paris as a result seem to have arisen merely as a release from the mundane procession of facts about the man.

The illustrations attest to massive attendances for the concerts in hangars. Glenn Miller's music has become the perfect expression of Second World War nostalgia. Interestingly enough, by the time of the Vietnam war, musical tastes ran counter to the official military entertainment so that Jimi Hendrix, favourite among the US troops, received no air time.

# Swinging into action

Charles Fox

BUCK CLAYTON with NANCY MILLER  
ELLIOTT  
Buck Clayton's Jazz World  
255pp. Macmillan. £15.  
0333 41733 X

Sidemen seem to notice - certainly they remember - more things than famous bandleaders do. Buck Clayton has led bands of his own occasionally, but it is his trumpet playing that gives him a status in jazz, beginning with the seven years he spent in Count Basie's band, from earliest days in Kansas City until he was drafted into the United States Army in 1943. Lester Young and - for a short while - Billie Holiday were in that band too. Yet Basie, in his recent autobiography *Good Morning Blues* (reviewed in the TLS of July 11, 1986), is extraordinarily perfunctory in his comments about those two remarkable performers. Clayton, although he takes the artistic prowess for granted, throws in plenty of personal detail. Young, it emerges, was a more than adequate softball pitcher in the band's baseball team (they frequently played against a painting of a severed Chinese head on the wall of her room. The rivalry between Young and Herschel Evans (their approaches to the tenor saxophone symbolized aesthetic extremes) was strictly an on-stage affair. On the other hand, Evans and Holiday loathed one another. But then Evans ("He looked more like a very handsome schoolteacher or a lawyer than a jazz musician", says Clayton) could hate with gusto. On one occasion, suiting action to impulse, he tossed Walter Page's sousaphone mouthpiece and Freddie Green's porkpie hat from a sixteenth-storey window.

This is in fact a book packed with anecdotes rather than insights, although some anecdotes do illuminate the music. So the notorious remark of Basie's first appearance in New York ("If you don't believe the trumpets are out of tune just listen to the saxophones, and if you don't believe the saxophones are out of tune just listen to the trombones, and if you don't believe the trombones are out of tune just listen to the whole damn band") gets partly explained when Clayton reveals that Joe Keyes, the original lead trumpet player, had his instrument literally held together with string and rubber bands. But in those days money was short: on the eve of departure for New York, Basie offered Clayton fourteen dollars a week to play at the Reno club from ten in the evening to four or five the next morning.

What surprises those of us accustomed to the cheerful amiability of musicians like Clayton is the violence in the background. Clayton and a friend were arrested and falsely accused of rape while hobnobbing their way to California. One of his first girlfriends tried to stab him midway through a dance. A bartender almost persuaded him to shoot the lover of another girlfriend. Leading a band in Shanghai at the start of the 1930s (Chiang Kai-shek's sister-in-law took tap-dancing lessons from the trombonist), Clayton and his sidemen got involved in fights with "nigger-hating" US marines. Jazz musicians of an earlier vintage all too often needed to be men of action as well.

Odd bits of information and opinion pop up. It seems the bouncers at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom were the roughest ever. And Clayton tantalizes by preferring Basie's earliest and smallest band, which never got recorded ("It was easier to swing with nine men than with fourteen"). Telling, as distinct from writing, the story has resulted in some irritating repetition. And in the pursuit of economy the otherwise excellent discography omits Clayton's recordings with Basie and Billie Holiday. But those are minor blemishes within this chronicle of a brave and musically distinguished career.

*The Complete Lyrics of Lorenz Hart* edited by Dorothy Hart and Richard Kimball (218pp. Hamish Hamilton. £25. 0 241 12004 7), brings together the 650 songs that Hart wrote between 1911 and 1943 including standards such as "Blue Moon" and "This Can't Be Love" as well as less familiar offerings such as "Madame Esther. Queen of Hester Street".

Handwritten note in the right margin: "The Complete Lyrics of Lorenz Hart" (written vertically).







